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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

AGAINST THE GIANTS!

MASSIVE WORLD OF GREYHAWK MAP PART 1

DUNGEON

ISSUE 118 · JANUARY 2005

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BOX OF FLUMPH: D&D'S LOVABLE LOSER RETURNS

DRAGONS, DROW, AND GIANTS. 'NUFF SAID.

NEW COLUMNS BY WIL WHEATON AND MONTE COOK

ISSUE #118 JANUARY 2005 VOLUME 19, NO 1

DUNGEON

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SPECIAL FEATURE

GREYHAWK MAP INSERT

It's finally here! Track your characters' exploits from the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth to the shores of the lake of Unknown Depths on this massive eight-panel map by Robert Lazzaretti.

ADVENTURES

16 BOX OF FLUMPH
Tim Hitchcock
It had to happen. Of all the creatures in the history of Dungeons & Dragons, the lowly flumph has perhaps the worst reputation. Can Tim Hitchcock and the Dungeon staff revive this loveable loser in a way that won't fill Prison Mail with hate mail? A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

34 SHADOWS OF THE ABYSS
Greg A. Vaughan
On the trail of Ilkharis, frost giant cleric of Kostchtchie and pawn of the Malgoth, the PCs venture out of Istivin to a mountain border fort inhabited by giants and a nasty blue dragon. Part Two of the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc. A D&D adventure for 11th-level characters.

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John Simcoe
At the heart of the Vesve Forest lies the warped, twisted region of deadly bogs, acidic gases, and treacherous terrain known as the Defiled Glades. And out of the Defiled Glades hops King Bog, a titanic awakened toad with a taste for player characters. A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

ON THE COVER

Matt Cavotta did such a good job on the "30 Greatest Adventures" intro illustration from issue #116 that we forgot to credit him. Sorry about that, Matt! On this month's cover, Matt brings us an adventurer discovering that going "Against the Giants" isn't as easy as it used to be.

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"There is wealth to be gained," stated Fianosther. "Dazzles and displays, marvels beyond worth, as well as charms, puissances, and elixers. But remember, I urge you nothing, I council nothing; if you are apprehended, you have only heard me exclaiming at the wealth of Iucounu the Laughing Magician! But here he comes. Quick: turn your back so that he may not see your face. Three hours he will be here, so much I guarantee!"

—Jack Vance
Eyes of the Overworld

DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

RPGA NETWORK

Take advantage of the RPGA'S PLAYER REWARDS program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *DUNGEON*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 2/28/05. Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

Box of Flumph (118BF1DN)
Shadow of the Abyss (118TA1DN)
Throne of Iuz (118TZ1DN)

TOO YOUNG FOR NOSTALGIA

I'll be 30 in a couple months, which might be one reason why so much of our content has looked back to the first decade of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS over the past several issues. I came to D&D very, very early thanks to indulgent family members and a burning curiosity about swords and sorcery. In 1983, that curiosity brought this 7-year-old to Gary Gygax's WORLD OF GREYHAWK campaign setting boxed set, a treasure chest of adventure ideas, imaginary history, and powerful personages.

My earliest D&D games involved a basic "roll high or low" dice mechanic that had little resemblance to the rules in my AD&D rulebooks. Even as a little kid, I wanted to move right to the Advanced rules, even if I didn't adhere to them strictly. Look, it's a little much to expect a 7-year-old to grasp the intricacies of weapon speed factors, psionics, and experience point distribution.

But the images, words, and (most importantly) the maps painted a picture of a world of fantasy that really appealed to me, even if I didn't understand how all of the numbers worked together. Before long, I was designing my own adventures (God help my players) and working on my own campaigns. And almost all of them had something to do with GREYHAWK.

That first boxed set came with a giant poster map of the Flanaess, the sub-continent that forms the backdrop of the GREYHAWK campaign setting. I distinctly remember running my hands across this map as a child, marveling at the promise of names like the Horned Society, the Iron League, and especially the Scarlet Brotherhood. These weren't just random syllables mashed together, but evocative names that in each case suggested a larger organization. Those organizations suggested a larger world. The boxed set didn't tell the young Erik Mona much of anything about what the Horned Society was or how it operated, but the name itself was enough to get me started on my own ideas.

Fast forward to 1998. I've since learned the rules. GREYHAWK had lost its originator to corporate politics, fallen into creative torpor, been shaken up with a war that still divides its fans, received a breath of fresh air with a new boxed set, and had fallen into creative torpor once again. But things were changing. TSR, after years of mismanagement, found itself in the friendly hands of Wizards of the Coast.

There, GREYHAWK enjoyed a brief but promising renaissance, with Lisa Stevens in charge of the product group. Beloved former *DRAGON* editor Roger E. Moore and newcomer Sean K Reynolds were to handle the bulk of writing for the new product line, with Lisa and editor Kij Johnson managing the line and hammering the words and continuity into place.

The centerpiece of their efforts was to be a huge map of the Flanaess that incorporated locations from GREYHAWK's 30-year publication history. To accomplish this, Lisa and Kij turned to a host of prominent Greyhawk fans online, including Steve "Tamerlain" Wilson, Paul Stormberg, and a nobody named Erik Mona.

All of us (and probably others I can't remember) combed through thousands of pages of published material, communicating via email over the course of several months about which cities, dungeons, towns, and villages should or shouldn't appear on the map. Finally, we exhausted our libraries and patiently waited for the map to come out.

And waited. And waited.

Big poster maps are expensive. They take an extraordinary amount of time for a cartographer to draw and design, and the printing costs can be nightmarishly high. Some time in 1999, after Lisa, Kij, Steve, Paul, and I had slaved over this map, we learned that Wizards had decided not to publish it after all. It just didn't make financial sense.

Fast forward again, this time to about a year ago. *DUNGEON* (and *DRAGON*) are now published by Paizo Publishing, owned by Lisa Stevens. I'm her able *DUNGEON* Editor-in-Chief. And we've still got a map to make. We had the notes from six years ago. We had the ambition and a way to make it work financially. And in Rob Lazzaretti, who has published some of the best work of his career in the pages of this magazine, we finally had an artist crazy enough to make it happen. For me, at least, the map has been worth the wait.

Erik Mona
erik.mona@paizo.com

Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to: Prison Mail, Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200 or send an email to dungeon@paizo.com.

Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

Dungeon #115

Our October issue featured the triumphant return of former editor Wolfgang Baur to DUNGEON's pages. Wolf's adventure, "Raiders of the Black Ice," brought a coldsnap to D&D campaigns everywhere by showing new cold weather options from the FROSTBURN supplement in play. Eberron creator Keith Baker revealed more of his world with "Fallen Angel," a nasty little excursion into the underbelly of Sharn: City of Towers. Christopher Perkins (another DUNGEON alum) brought us "Strike on Shatterhorn," the penultimate Shackled City Adventure Path installment, giving yuan-ti fans a treat and sticking it to the heroes of Cauldron one second-to-last time. Back issues are still available at www.paizo.com.

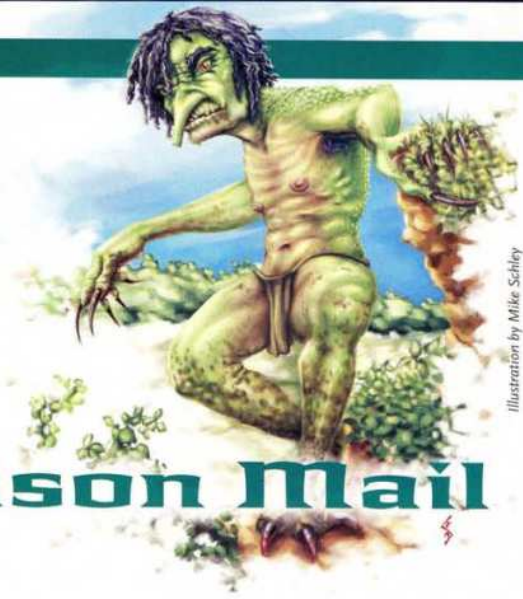

Illustration by Mike Schley

Prison Mail

Ironjaw Cheated!

As everyone always says, I have always wanted to write in to DUNGEON, but never got around to it. Then I read issue #114 and just got blown away. The adventures are all extremely good, and the *Isle of Dread* re-write caused my geeky little heart to race. After all those years, the Isle is back!

My only negative comments are (1) Ironjaw's stats (in "Mad God's Key") appear to be wrong (how can a 2nd-level half-orc barbarian have two feats?), and (2) where are the phanaton and rakasta? It just ain't the same Isle with out them!!

Keep up the good work, and if your bosses are reading this, GIVE THESE GUYS A RAISE!!! They sure as heck deserve it!

James Barrow
England

Thanks for the kind words, James. I showed your demand for staff raises to our publisher, and he responded with something like "It's funny how the editors pick which letters to print in the magazine." He's right, of course, but we still want more money.

1) Irontusk shouldn't have two feats. I suggest dropping Improved Initiative, as his Athletic feat is more important to the chase scene.

2) The phanaton and rakasta will appear in the next year, either here or in DRAGON, our sister magazine.

Maure on the Way!

I will first say thank you for publishing my email in DUNGEON #113 regarding high-level dungeons. I just started to run my players through "Maure Castle" (DUNGEON #112) and we are enjoying it immensely! Thanks, DUNGEON, for providing yet another awesome environment for my campaign. My hat is off to Robert Kuntz and Gary Gygax for a "true resurrection" of an old favorite. I disagree with David West's email printed in DUNGEON #115 regarding "Maure Castle." I understand what he is saying about using an entire issue of DUNGEON for just one story, however sometimes there comes a dungeon of such quality it warrants most if not all of an issue. Two excellent examples of this are: "Prison of the Firebringer" (issue #101) and the dungeon in question: "Maure Castle." Since the format change in DUNGEON I have been inspired to design a high-level module for submission. My players as well as other DM friends of mine would love to see more levels of "Maure Castle" within the pages of near future DUNGEON.

Jim Zettlemoyer
Hollister, CA

Then you should be pleased to tell your friends that Robert J. Kuntz is currently at work on at least one additional level of "Maure Castle," which will be published as the high-level adventure in an upcoming issue. The phenomenal reader response to "Maure Castle" suggests that it may be one of the most popular DUNGEON adventures ever, and certainly the most popular stunt I've pulled since becoming Chief Demilich of the magazine. As long as the readers demand it, we'll continue to expand "Maure Castle" in these pages.

Erik Mona's Report Card

I just picked up DUNGEON #115. And now I can definitely make a prognosis on the new direction of DUNGEON and the leadership of Erik Mona.

I think the last 4 issues of *Dungeon* offer clues about which way is the right way and which way is the wrong way. I think right now *Dungeon*, for the most part, is on the right path. Here is what I think they are doing right:

Issue 112 was a special case, but I think it indicates a step in the right direction—old modules redone for 3.5. I know I am one who wants to see both more of "Maure Castle" and more of the early adventures redone for 3.5. On the top of my list is *Keep on the Borderlands*.

Issue 113 took a step backward, but I figure Erik had to finish up stuff that was in the pipe and kill off *Polyhedron*. The Eberron adventure using the tiles was all right. I think this might be a move in the wrong direction as the tiles require a reader to be a big D&D Miniatures follower to use, and if someone does not have them then that person might feel sort of less for the experience.

Issue 114 was a great leap forward for *Dungeon*. With the dead weight of *Polyhedron* gone the magazine has really come into its own. The Isle of Dread article and the adventure "Torrents of Dread" keeps up the great "update the old stuff idea." "Mad God's Key" is a great generic adventure I can file the serial numbers off of and drop pretty much anywhere. "Thirteen Cages" helps to wrap up the Adventure Path and the columns in the back are especially useful. However I do have a question. Where is John Four and more importantly DM's Toolbox? Monte's Dungeoncraft is a great thing to have in *Dungeon* and I think DM's Toolbox would be another great one to have. I hope it did not get lost in the transition to the new format.

However I think *Dungeon* 115 takes a step backwards. Here we have the same general layout as before, which is good. However, "Raiders of the Black Ice" is very much a product tie-in. I appreciate these "take it for a spin" adventures, but let's try to keep them to a minimum (maybe one a quarter?). Also, try not to waste talent like Wolfgang on such adventures (that is, unless it was his idea). Then we have another Eberron adventure that uses a lot of warforged. Are we going to get an Eberron adventure every issue? I find these adventures (especially the ones with lots of Eberron crunchiness) to be the hardest to just pick up and use. This is followed by the supposed conclusion of the Adventure Path (but actually there is just one more, really...). And we have no "update the old stuff" article. Bummer.

So the winning format in my mind? One generic adventure per issue. This can be a product tie-in quarterly. One update adventure per issue. Possibly (since update material is limited) it might be good to rotate the Eberron, Forgotten Realms, and update adventures. That would allow everyone to be happy and it would make those features quarterly. Top it off with one Adventure Path adventure per issue. This adventure format would give you plenty of time to line up submissions for future issues also. Follow that with Dungeoncraft, Downer, DM's Toolbox, and Campaign Workbook stuff and keep that pattern up and you will probably do quite well.

Aaron Webb
Seattle, WA

What you propose isn't far from the approach we're shooting for, Aaron. We simply couldn't resist a warforged-focused Eberron adventure, since warforged are one of the most distinctive elements of D&D's newest campaign setting. Some of our upcoming Eberron offerings (including last issue's "Fallen Angel") ought to be a little easier to adapt for folks using other settings. The miniatures tile map was a failed experiment that won't be repeated.

I don't agree at all that Wolfgang Baur (surely one of Dungeon's best authors) was "wasted" on a Frostburn tie-in at all. For starters, he co-wrote Frostburn, so he seemed a natural choice. Second, books like Frostburn exist because the core D&D rules don't really provide everything a DM needs to run nonstandard adventures. Since Dungeon would quickly grow stale if it offered only temperate climate adventures, we'll occasionally push the boundaries to the edges of the earth (or, more precisely, to the edges of the Oerth). If the adventure is fun and contains all the secondary supplement rules within it, I think it's far from a waste.

Next Month in Dungeon

Dungeon #119

The World of D&D Poster Map (2 of 4)
The second of four giant poster maps by all-star cartographer Robert Lazaretti reveals the treacherous Crystalmist Mountains, the forlorn Sea of Dust, and the pirate isles of the Azure Sea. At last, *Dungeon* readers can chart our core D&D adventures on a world map fit for kings!

Unfamiliar Territory
by Christopher West
When his wizardly master's tower collapsed ages ago, the imp Hezzrack found himself trapped in the basement for a long, long time. To escape, he signed a contract with a particularly unpleasant goblin adept, fleeing his prison of stone by leaping into a prison of servitude. If only a group of adventurers were to come along and take care of the goblin and release him completely! A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

Wrath of the Abyss
by Greg A. Vaughan
The drow have returned to the beleaguered city of Istivin, and worse, they have captured the only living creature who knows how to destroy the parasitic Abyssal entity that taints Istivin's alleys and foundations. What ties do these dark elves have to the notorious Vault of the Drow? And what exactly is the creature that haunts the city above? Find out in the exciting conclusion to the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc! A D&D adventure for 12th-level characters.

Tomb of Aknar Ratella
by Jack Flynn
Long ago, Aknar Ratella brought pain and desolation down upon the land. His reign of ruin was finally ended by an unlikely alliance of the forces of law: a band of devils and devas slew the warlord but were unable to destroy his dangerous weapons and relics. For many centuries, his tomb stood unspoiled... but now, a new player has entered the scene. A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

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THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK
LEGEND

Mountains

Volcano

Passage

Hills

Clear

Desert

Deciduous forest

Coniferous forest

Jungle

River

Swamp

Glacier

Village

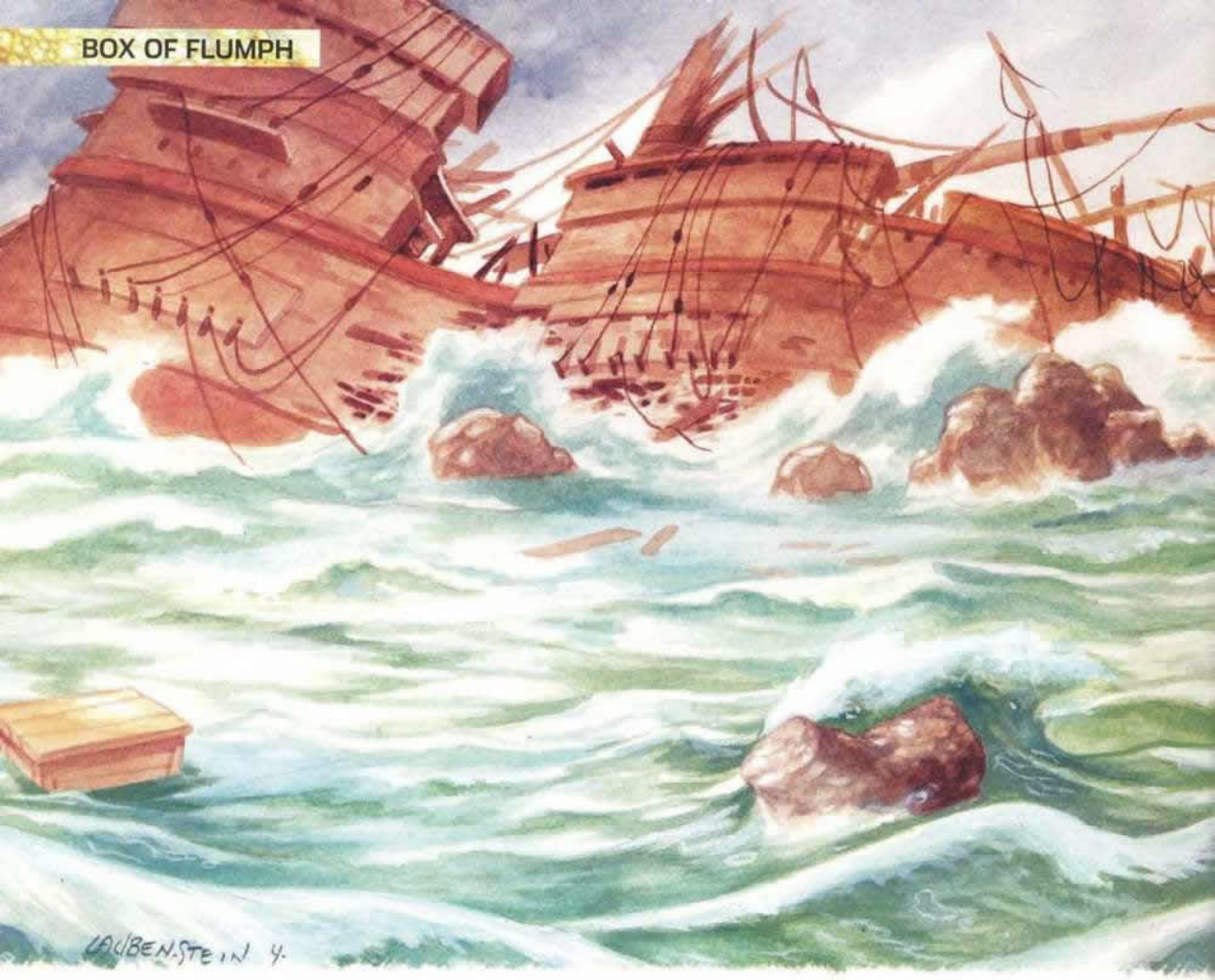
Town

City

Castle

Ruin

Dungeon



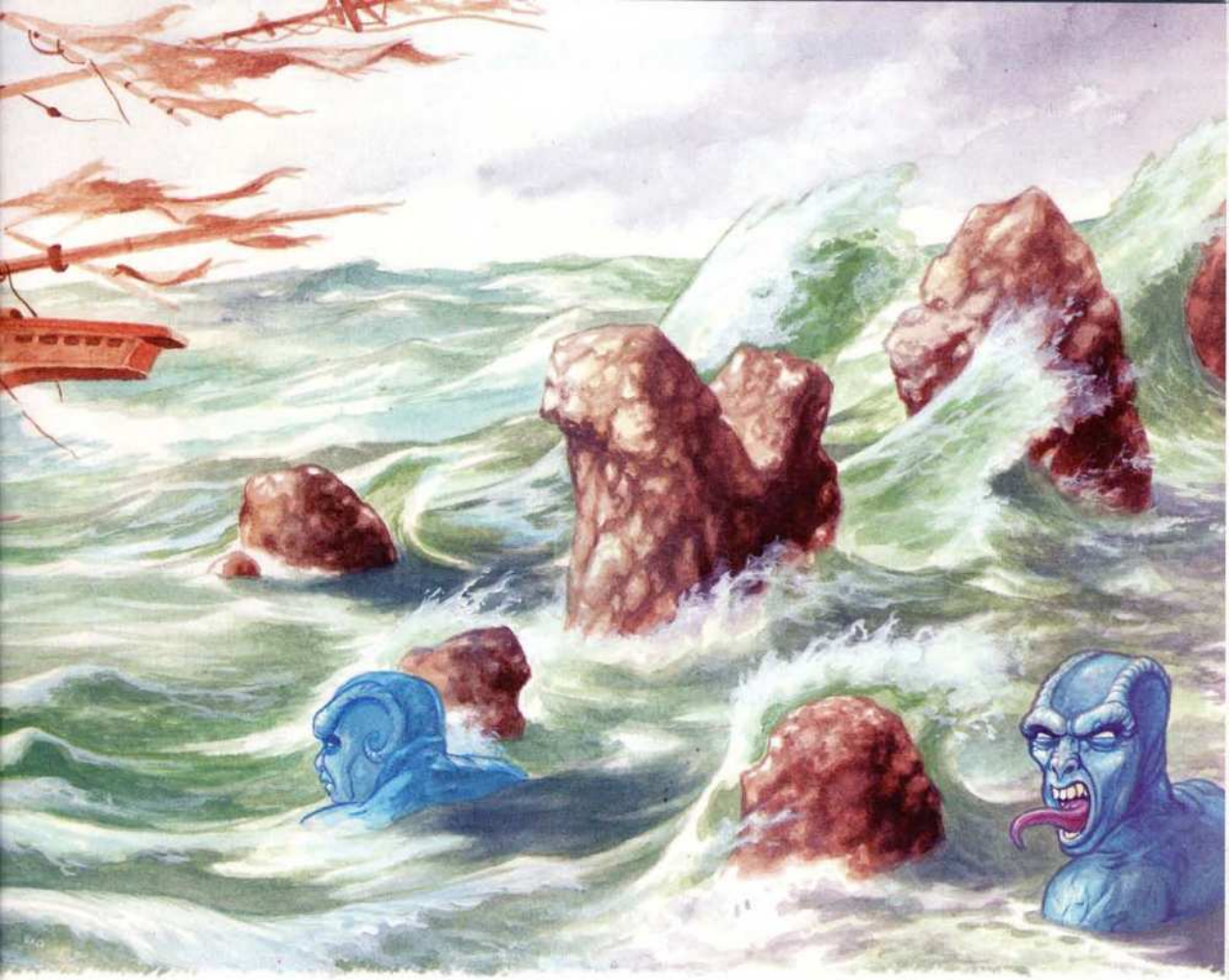
BOX OF FLUMPH

By Tim Hitchcock
Illustrations by Jeff Laubenstein
Cartography by Christopher West

Any Setting • Low Level • Urban

Scaling the Adventure

"Box of Flumph" is designed for four 1st-level characters, but can be modified for 2nd–3rd level parties by adding one or two class levels to the NPCs. Increase the DCs for the various skill checks required for success by an equal amount. When chaos breaks out on board *The Angelina*, you can have more of the sailors side with Dusky, forcing the PCs to fight more of the mutineers. Finally, add 2–4 more lacedons to the final encounter to make sure that the PCs end up tangling with more of the undead monsters.



Stillsquall is a frontier town, wedged between civilization and wilderness and reliant on not only income from fishing and salt mines but upon adventurers for the necessities of life. Yet it isn't undead or bugbears that have the town's magistrate up in arms of late.

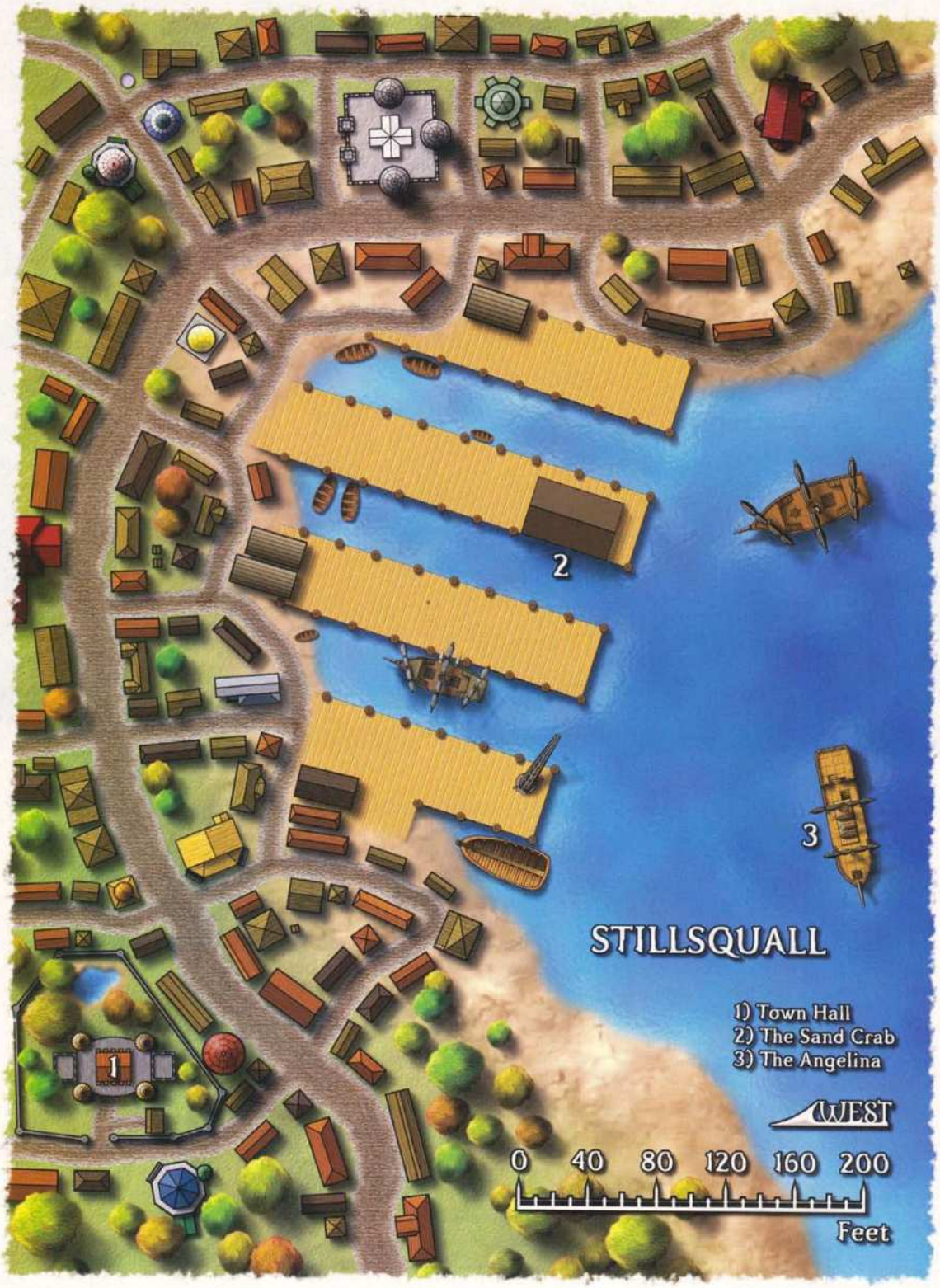
"Box of Flumph" is a D&D adventure for four 1st-level player characters. The adventure takes place in a port town along a seacoast—this town can be in any campaign setting. Most of the NPCs involved are low level, however they can be easily scaled to become more threatening as noted in the Scaling the Adventure sidebar. "Box of Flumph" is somewhat non-linear, and its course is driven by the PCs' actions. Familiarize yourself with the NPCs and areas detailed in this adventure before running it.

Adventure Background

About a month ago, local salt miners from the port town of Stillsquall struck a particularly rich deposit of precious salt, but upon expanding their excavations they ran into an odd dilemma. Not only were the deposits riddled with tangled networks of passageways, but certain areas of the mine were plagued by a particularly nauseating scent. So repulsive was this stink that the miners were forced to cease all operations. This intrigued Kilion Kresner, a powerful local spice merchant. As the miners left their jobs, Kilion purchased the mine for pocket change, and then sent a "fixer" named Jonas "the Grackle" Westman to explore the mines, find out what was causing the stink, and take care of it.

The Grackle soon discovered the source of the mine's problems. A small group of unusual creatures called flumphs laired in its deeper reaches. Normally peaceful and quiet creatures, flumphs defend their homes by spewing foul-smelling bile. When the Grackle reported to Kilion, the salt merchant hit upon a devious plan. He promised to double the Grackle's payment if he could capture the flumphs alive and smuggle them into the mines down the coast that belong to Kilion's competition. The Grackle, being a greedy soul, agreed. He returned to the mine, managed to resist the nauseating stink, and found to his delight that turning a flumph over rendered it helpless. He was able to gather up the entire family of aberrations and had them all boxed (upside down, of course) in crates by nightfall.

The Grackle intended to load the


STILLSQUALL
1) Town Hall
2) The Sand Crab
3) The Angelina
WEST
0 40 80 120 160 200
Feet
1
2
3

boxes of flumphs onto a ship in order to transport them to competing mines, but he now finds himself in a slight dilemma. Over the past few years, he has made more than his share of enemies in Stillsquall, and now that he needs to ship out his flumph boxes, he's found that he's having trouble keeping the whole operation quiet. On top of this, he's overspent the advance Kilion paid him, and both the law and the local thieves' guild are looking for him to pay several outstanding fines. The Grackle knows that he has worn out his prospects locally and now hopes to use the job as his ticket out of town. If only he can smuggle the flumphs onto a merchant ship called the *Angelina*, everything will work out. It has to!

Adventure Synopsis

When the appearance of a notorious but small-time hustler known as the Grackle sparks the attention of the local authorities, adventures are hired to keep tabs on him and try to figure out what he's up to. However, the PCs aren't the only ones watching him—the thieves' guild has placed a hit on him for repeated contractual violations. The pressure forces the Grackle to get sloppy, and after his paranoia overtakes hiim he leaves behind a sealed box containing one of his victims: a flumph. From the confused and frightened aberration the PCs learn that the Grackle abducted the rest of his family. The flumph pleads with the characters to free his brethren so that they may return home.

Meanwhile the Grackle steps up his plans to ship out of town as soon as possible on the *Angelina*. The PCs must board the ship to free the kidnapped flumphs. However, as they attempt to do so, the Grackle makes a final desperate bid to escape by setting the ship adrift toward the rocks—rocks that just happen to be infested with hungry undead.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs could be in the small port of Stillsquall for any number of reasons. Plenty of work is available in the bustling town. Prospectors pay adventurers good coin to clear abandoned mines of monsters before reopening them. Merchants create a constant demand for guards, and incoming and outgoing ships have a steady need for crewmembers.

Since this is a low-level adventure, you may wish to introduce it as the starting point for a new campaign. Perhaps the PCs have come to Stillsquall after hearing of its reputation as a base of operations for adventurers who seek to explore the nearby wilderness. In this case you can actually start the adventure as the PCs are on board a ship approaching Stillsquall. Give them a while to get to know each other; perhaps they're the only adventurers on board during a long sea voyage, and have been drawn to each other simply by enforced proximity.

Chapter One: Welcome to Stillsquall

Stillsquall is a small town that can be located anywhere along a somewhat hilly seacoast in your campaign world, at least a few day's travel from any larger cities. The primary industries in Stillsquall are fishing and mining. In particular, a large and prosperous salt mine overlooks the small town from the hill that rises to the west. The town itself has a frontier feel to it; the majority of its citizens are fishermen or miners, and as a result they tend to dress rough and talk rougher. The town's position near the edge of civilization also makes it a favorite base of operations for adventurers who seek to explore the wilderness that surrounds much of the town. Much of the town is left undeveloped in this adventure, allowing you to flesh it out as you see fit; use the encounters detailed in this adventure as inspiration in developing the other areas of the settlement.

The town of Stillsquall is governed by the magistrate and his staff of clerks and barristers. Magistrate Aurus lives in a large building that sits atop the southern bluff—he also holds court every morning here, and it's not uncommon to see a long line of people waiting to air grievances, propose actions, or seek counsel. The busiest section of Stillsquall is known as Central Wharfs. This district faces the middle of the harbor. Its most prominent features are its four huge piers, which facilitate commerce between land and sea. Large ships do not dock at the piers. Instead, ship owners rent or purchase harbor moorings and use smaller craft to travel from ship to shore. The northern section of town consists mostly of residences, although a few taverns and inns can be found near the coast. The most memorable sight visitors carry away from Stillsquall, however, comes not from the town but from Deadlight Rock, a barren stony isle near the harbor mouth that once supported a majestic lighthouse. Today, that lighthouse is in ruin, yet on some nights, lights still shine where the ruined tower once stood. Local wisdom holds that these lights are from ghosts that now haunt the barren isle. Unknown to most of Stillsquall's citizens, a small pack of lacedons (aquatic ghouls) lurks in the waters around the old lighthouse. Whether these ghostlights are merely manifestations of St. Elmo's fire or something more sinister is entirely up to you.

♛ **Stillsquall (small town)**: Conventional; AL LN; 800 gp limit; Assets (38,800 gp); Population 970, Mixed (76% human, 8% dwarf, 6% half-orc, 4% gnome, 3% half-elf, 2% halfling, 1% other).

Authority figures: Magistrate Aurus (male human aristocrat 4/expert 5); Eliam Croweye, captain of the port guard (male human fighter 5).

Event 1: The Job Offer

"Box of Flumph" begins once the PCs reach Stillsquall. The town guard has recently learned that the Grackle is back in town, and they'd like to find him and bring him in for questioning. Unfortunately, the town guard has their hands full with several other problems and can't spare the time or resources to track down such a small-time criminal. Rather, they've posted wanted signs throughout town, advertising their desire to find the Grackle and interrogate him. The signs implore any interested parties to report

to the town hall for further details. The PCs might even be approached by one of the town guards as they arrive in town—town guards conduct brief interviews with new visitors to Stillsquall to make sure their business in town is legitimate, and if they get the idea that the PCs are trustworthy and looking for work, they'll suggest they present themselves to the magistrate for a job.

Magistrate Aurus (human male aristocrat 4/expert 2; Sense Motive +12) is a plump and jovial man with a purple-veined nose and a long white curly wig. He graciously thanks the PCs for answering his summons (be they from wanted posters or town guards), and offers to explain his dilemma over dinner. He explains that a small-time hustler known as the Grackle, a man responsible for causing much grief to local merchants, has been spotted down at the Central Wharfs. The magistrate doesn't know what the Grackle's up to, but on previous visits the scoundrel's smuggling and fencing activities caused terrible chaos. As a result, he would like to stop the Grackle's latest plans before they have a chance to rile up his citizens. The town guard is too understaffed and under-trained for the task, alas. At the very least, Magistrate Aurus would appreciate it if the PCs could figure out what the Grackle is up to without drawing attention to the fact that he's being watched. If they can catch him alive, all the better. The magistrate offers a reward of 400 gp to the party if they can provide information that leads to the Grackle's quick capture. If the PCs are able to catch him alive and bring him in to face his crimes, the reward climbs to 1,200 gp for the party. If characters accept, the magistrate tells them that the Grackle is a tall thin man with a sallow complexion, a short shock of brown hair, dark eyes, and a beak-like nose, and that their best bet for finding him is to ask around the Central Wharves, perhaps posing as interested buyers of whatever the Grackle might be selling.

Event 2: Finding the Grackle

The Grackle is a fairly infamous local hustler and smuggler, and he knows that both the magistrate and the thieves' guild are looking for him. Yet he's not without friends in town—all of whom are small-time crooks and thugs who aren't affiliated with Stillsquall's somewhat disorganized thieves' guild. These allies, while few in number, have managed to help hide the Grackle's movements in town as he arranges for passage on a ship and prepares to smuggle his boxed flumph prisoners aboard. As a result, finding a lead might take some time.

Allow each PC a DC 15 Gather Information check as they ask around town for the Grackle. Each check represents 1d4+1 hours of work. Failure by 5 or more indicates that their questioning has drawn the attention of the thieves' guild. The guild takes no actions against the PCs, but they do keep an eye on their actions in case they get to the Grackle before them.

With a successful Gather Information check, the PCs find an old dwarf beggar named **Goffi** (male dwarf warrior 1) who indicates that he might have seen someone of that description, but that his memory isn't what it used to be since he went broke. With a bribe of at least 10 gp (or a successful DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check) he admits that he saw someone matching the Grackle's description a few nights ago. Goffi was nursing a bottle of ale in his favorite spot under the pilings at the east end of the northernmost pier when he saw something strange going on to the south. The tide was out that early morning, so Goffi crept up along the rocks to get a better look and saw a man matching the description the PCs gave loading several crates into a rowboat moored to a piling directly below the Sand Crab, a tavern and inn frequented by sailors and toughs. The man finished loading his crates and rowed out to sea, but just before dawn (about an hour after he left) he returned, moored the skiff in the same spot, then clambered up and into the Sand Crab through a window in the southwest corner of the building. Goffi can point out the Sand Crab for the PCs, but wants no part in anything the PCs have planned for the Grackle.

Event 3: Investigating the Sand Crab

The Sand Crab is a long, single-floor inn and tavern built at the end of a pier. Its proximity to the water makes it a convenient spot for merchants and shippers seeking a private meeting place. Rooms, food, and other services tend to be pricey (125% *Player's Handbook* prices), ensuring that the ordinary riff-raff avoids the place, much to the delight of the clientele. The tavern itself takes up the majority of the eastern portion of the building, with a number of private rooms filling the western section.

Instead of going inside to talk to the Sand Crab's owner about the Grackle, the PCs might decide to investigate the southwest corner of the building from the outside. If they do, a successful DC 15 Search check made from a pier or from shore allows a character to spot the small skiff moored under the tavern amidst a thick forest of pilings. Discovering the boat is automatic if the PCs investigate the area at sea level.

The Sand Crab is owned and operated by a perpetually surly man named **Osten Ranicle** (male human expert 2; Will +4). He keeps no employees, so service tends to be slow. But at the same time, the fact that there's no poorly paid, easily bribed servants means that the customers tend to feel more comfortable conducting their business here. Osten tends to remain close-mouthed about his customers, but at the same time doesn't ask questions of new customers as long as they can pay. Although his attitude is initially indifferent to strangers, it shifts to unfriendly if they ask about his clients. Thus, it takes a successful DC 40 Diplomacy or Intimidate check to get him to admit that the Grackle has rented a room here for the past week. Of course, *charm person* and similar effects can secure his cooperation as well, although if he realizes the PCs are using magic he'll try to escape and contact the city guards.

While Osten certainly won't allow non-paying customers into the private wing of the Sand Crab, he's perfectly willing to rent a room to one of the PCs. His prices are high enough to ensure that his inn alone in Stillsquall usually has one or two available rooms. Each room rents for 1 gp per night, although the rooms are far from extravagant accommodations.

Development: If the PCs are having trouble tracking down the Grackle, you can have the Sand Crab be the only inn in town with an available room. When the PCs rent a room here, you can then proceed with Event 4 at any time after they've retired to sleep.

Event 4: The Upset Flumph (EL 3)

Run this event as soon as the PCs get into the Grackle's room in the Sand Crab. Alternately, if the PCs are having trouble tracking the Grackle down, this event could begin when Cami releases the flumph and screams, alerting PCs in nearby rooms (perhaps a room they just rented for their own lodging) to trouble.

The Grackle has rented the southwesternmost room in the Sand Crab, and over the past week has used it as a staging area to store captured flumphs. He's purchased some cargo space and passage on a merchant ship called the *Angelina*, the first mate of which is one of his friends. With his aid, the Grackle has been smuggling boxes of flumphs on board under the captain's nose.

When this adventure begins, the Grackle has only one flumph left, but fate has intervened. His sources have recently warned him that the thieves' guild is hot on his trail, and as a result the Grackle has been afraid to return to his room at the Sand Crab. With four flumphs successfully stowed, he's confident he has enough to spread chaos in the competing mine, and with the *Angelina* only a few hours away from departing he's decided to wait it out on board the ship.

What the Grackle doesn't realize is that the thieves' guild is closer than he thinks.

The door to the Grackle's room is locked, as are the shutters to the room's single window. Getting to the window from the outside requires a successful DC 10 Climb check. Failure by 5 or more results in a 10-foot fall into the 10-foot-deep water below.

The room itself contains a bed, a chair and desk, a rickety dresser, and little more except for a single crate sitting near the foot of the bed. Although the bed is unmade and has been slept in recently, there are no physical clues here. The Grackle carries all his gear on his person, and with the exception of the contents of the crate, there's nothing here to link him to the room.

Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5, hp 10; Break DC 15; Open Lock DC 20.

Window Shutter: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 5; Break DC 13; Open Lock DC 20.

Creatures: Only a few moments before the PCs arrive at the Sand Crab (either to seek lodging or in search of the Grackle), a young street tough named Cami snuck into his room via the window. Cami has been trying to join the Stillsquall thieves' guild for months, but she's never been able to catch their attention. She heard they've been seeking the Grackle, and realized if she could catch the smuggler and present him to the guild, her membership would be a snap. She put her contacts in town to work, and recently discovered that he rented a room in the Sand Crab.

Cami recently got into the Grackle's room via the window, locking it behind her so as to not arouse his suspicion if he returns via that route. For the past few hours, she's been waiting patiently for the Grackle to return, at which point she plans to sneak attack him with her sap to knock him unconscious. Unfortunately, her curiosity about the strange crate sitting next to the window finally got the better of her, and only a few moments before the PCs appear on the scene, she pried the crate open. Shocked at finding a squirming living thing inside, she staggered back, knocking the crate over in the process and inadvertently flipping the flumph inside back onto its belly, allowing it to escape.

The flumph is named Ulmoapop, and is the leader of the small group that lived in the mine. He is frightened, disoriented, and hungry after spending several days upside down in a crate.

Cami, female human rogue 2/expert 1: CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 3d6+6 plus 3; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1, Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d4+2/19–20, *+1 dagger*) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, trap finding, trap sense +1; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Disable Device +7, Gather Information +8, Hide +10, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +9, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +4.

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Stealthy, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Halfling.

Possessions: Leather armor, *+1 dagger*, light crossbow, 12 bolts, thieves' tools, pouch containing 17 gp and 50 sp.

Ulmoapop, male flumph sorcerer 2: CR 2; Tiny aberration; HD 2d8 plus 2d4; hp 16; Init +8; Spd 5 ft., fly 15 (poor); AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2, Grp –8; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d4–2 plus 1d4 acid, tentacles); Space/Reach 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA acidic tentacles, plummeting charge (+8 melee), rancid spurt (DC 11), spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., helplessness, summon familiar (currently has no familiar); AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 6, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 16

Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +14, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5, Survival +5.

Feats: Combat Casting, Hover[B], Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse[B].

Languages: Celestial, Common.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5; caster level 2): 0—*daze* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*, *resistance*; 1st—*color spray* (DC 14), *shield*.

Tactics: The PCs should arrive on the scene just after Cami screams and Ulmoapop starts slithering out of his crate. Cami doesn't know what to make of the flumph, and immediately starts firing on him with her crossbow on her initiative. Ulmoapop is disoriented and confused, and if he goes first in the round he tries to reason with Cami (to no avail). Once she starts shooting him, he reacts first with a rancid spurt, then with *color spray* spells. If the PCs don't intervene, the combat plays out. If Cami wins, she flees through the window. If Ulmoapop manages to nauseate Cami or knock her out with *color spray*, he hides under the bed in terror. In this case, Cami flees through the window as soon as she recovers.

Development: Cami's scream and Ulmoapop's rancid spurt are both enough to alert everyone in the Sand Crab that trouble is afoot. Osten Ranicle responds by grabbing a club and quickly moving to investigate, but once he sees the flumph or smells its stink he panics and flees.

If captured alive Cami clams up and refuses to talk. If her initial attitude of unfriendly is adjusted to friendly or helpful, she'll admit she was looking for the Grackle as a way to get in good with the thieves' guild. She has no more information about the Grackle or the guild, unfortunately.

Ulmoapop is scared but desperate. The leader of his family unit, he is wracked with guilt over the capture of his mate and offspring. He begs characters to help him rescue his kin. Although he's spent the last few days upside down in a crate, he can tell the PCs that he and his family recently settled in the luscious, tasty salt mine after a long journey through the Underdark. He goes on to say that they were all recently captured by a man who seemed to have little trouble flipping them over and delivering a powerful punch to knock them out. Although this might make the Grackle sound like a monk, in fact he just used Improved Trip to flip the flumphs over, then used his free follow-up attack to make a nonlethal unarmed attack with additional sneak attack damage (since flipped-over flumphs are helpless and denied their Dexterity bonus to AC). After being dispatched in this manner, Ulmoapop awoke several hours later, still upside down and now wedged in a crate that was too tight for him to use Escape Artist to flip himself over.

Although he spent the last several days upside down in a box, Ulmoapop was able to hear what was going on around him in the room. In particular he remembers how every day, he heard someone take another crate out through the widow, followed shortly thereafter by diminishing splashing noises similar to those produced by a rowboat. Of more immediate use, the flumph tells the PCs that, not long after he awoke in his crate prison, he overheard a conversation between his captor and an unknown male voice. Ulmoapop describes this unknown voice as thick and guttural but with a slight speech impediment; the speaker's words whistled slightly whenever he pronounced words with an "S" sound. The two spoke only shortly, but Ulmoapop distinctly remembers his captor mentioning that, "early morning is probably best for moving the crates out to the *Angelina*—I think I can move two per night, and I'll pick up the last one just before we leave."

Ulmoapop begs the PCs to help track down his missing four family members. He has little to offer in return for their aid, unfortunately, since the Grackle took his only possession (a *wand of mage armor*). If the PCs can rescue his kin and capture the Grackle, Ulmoapop promises them the wand as a reward. In the meantime, Ulmoapop intends to hide amongst the pilings under the pier near the shore. He understands that his appearance can disgust or distress humanoids, and asks the PCs to meet him there after dark once they've rescued his kin. He's simply not brave enough at this point to accompany the PCs unless they can convince him they need his help with a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check.

Chapter Two: The Angelina

The Grackle is currently hiding out on board the *Angelina*, a merchant ship moored in Stillsquall's harbor. The PCs have most likely learned of the *Angelina* from Ulmoapop, although they probably don't realize what the name signifies. A successful DC 10 Gather Information check is enough to learn from locals that the *Angelina* is a merchant ship moored in the harbor—the informant can even point out which of the ships in the harbor it is. If a PC specifically states he's asking around the Central Wharves or talking mostly to sailors, this Gather Information check takes only 1d4+1 minutes rather than 1d4+1 hours.

If the PCs don't learn about the *Angelina* from Ulmoapop (as is likely the case if the flumph doesn't survive the battle in Event 4), you may need to introduce a new clue for them to follow up on. Perhaps as the PCs leave the Sand Crab, they're approached by a halfling who says that he overheard them asking about the Grackle and for the right price (100 gp) he'll tell them what he knows. If the PCs pay the price (or manage to shift the halfling's attitude from indifferent to helpful with a successful DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate check), the halfling says he saw the Grackle talking with a half-orc named Dusky a few evenings ago. Dusky is the first mate of the *Angelina*, as the halfling is glad to point out.

The *Angelina* is scheduled to leave port with the high tide. The exact time is left vague so you can time it so the ship is scheduled to leave only an hour or so after the PCs find out that the Grackle is likely on board. The ship is moored about 200 feet from shore and from the end of southernmost pier. Characters can, of course, swim out to the *Angelina* (the waters of the harbor are rough, so it's a DC 15 check), but most people take skiffs out to the moored boats. The PCs can hire a local to take them out to the *Angelina* for only 1 sp, or they can buy their own skiff

and row out themselves for 50 gp (plus 4 gp for a pair of oars).

The *Angelina* herself is a two-masted square-rigger used mainly for shipping cargo. Most of the ship is made from well-oiled mahogany, but she sports a dark-green paint job below the water line. Overall, she's a well-made ship that, despite her years of service to her captain, has held up remarkably well.

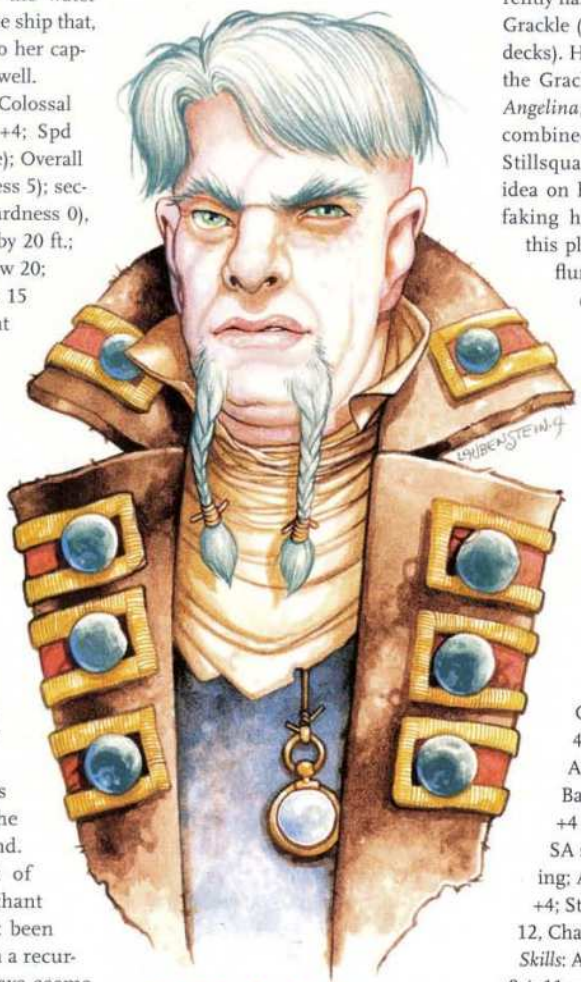
***Angelina*, sailing ship**: Colossal vehicle; Profession (sailor) +4; Spd wind × 20 ft (nautical average); Overall AC –3; Section hp 50 (hardness 5); section AC 3; Rigging hp 80 (hardness 0), AC 1; Ram 12d6; Face 80 ft. by 20 ft.; height 10 ft. (draft 10 ft.); Crew 20; Cargo 150 tons (Spd wind × 15 ft. if 75 tons or more); Current Load 100 tons.

The Angelina's Crew

The crew of the *Angelina* consists of twenty sailors, including a captain and first mate. The PCs likely visit the ship as it is preparing for departure, so the entire crew is above decks at the time of their visit. The crew tends to ignore visitors to the ship, leaving them to the captain or (more often) the first mate to deal with.

Captain Sarim Pepper is a veteran of the sea, and the *Angelina* is his third command. He's made a fair amount of money as captain of a merchant ship, but the years have not been kind to him. He suffers from a recurrent lung infection that always seems to come back worse than before every winter, even though he's paid to have it magically healed nearly a dozen times. Each year he promises himself that this will be his last before retiring, but each spring the infection goes away and his greed gets the better of him.

Unknown to Captain Sarim, the ship's first mate has had designs on the position of captain for several months now. This is Dusky, a half-orc who has been slowly recruiting members of the *Angelina*'s crew to his cause. Dusky is a gruff individual, made even more so by the distinctive speech impediment caused by his large teeth. If the PCs spoke with Ulmoapop earlier and then hear Dusky speak, they may make the connection when they hear this whistling speech impediment. He plans to incite a mutiny during the ship's coming voyage, a decision he finalized when his old friend Jonas (aka the Grackle) came to him with an interesting request. Dusky agreed to let the Grackle smuggle the flumphs on board for free, providing that the Grackle would lend a hand taking the ship when the time to strike came. Dusky has recruited half of the *Angelina*'s crew, and now with the Grackle's skill at fighting dirty to back him up, he's ready to move once the ship gets out to sea.



Captain Sarim Pepper

As mentioned above, the *Angelina* currently has a 21st member on board—the Grackle (who is currently lurking below decks). Himself the son of a sea captain, the Grackle grew up on ships like the *Angelina*, and his knowledge of them combined with what he knows about Stillsquall Harbor has given him an idea on how he can escape the city by faking his own death. Unfortunately, this plan requires the sacrifice of his flumph cargo, but if it comes to a choice between getting paid and avoiding capture, the Grackle's made his choice. He'll scuttle the *Angelina* on the undead-haunted crags of Deadlight Rock.

Tensions run high on board the *Angelina*, and it may just take something as simple as a group of adventurers coming on board and looking for a fugitive to set light to the powder keg.

Captain Sarim Pepper, male human expert 3/rogue 1: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 4d6–4; hp 12; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2, Grp +8, Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ trapfinding; AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +8, Balance +10, Climb +9 (+11 with ropes or in rigging), Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +7, Profession (merchant) +5, Profession (sailor) +11, Swim +9, Use Rope +10.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Grapple, Skill Focus (Profession—sailor).

Languages: Aquan, Common, Dwarven, Halfling.

Possessions: *+1 padded armor, 2 potions of remove disease, 2 potions of water breathing*, fine woolen coat worth 50 gp, purse containing 62 gp.

Durgol "Dusky" Gathok, male half-orc rogue 1/fighter 2: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 1d6+2 plus 3; hp 31; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grap +8; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+3/18–20, *+1 rapier*) or +4 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Intimidate +7, Profession (sailor) +3, Tumble +6, Swim +7.

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike, Persuasive, Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *+1 rapier*, masterwork chain shirt, *potion of bull's strength*, purse with 25 gp, woolen coat, cotton scarf.

Sailor, male human warrior 1 (18): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grap +3; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+2/18–20, rapier) or +2 ranged (1d4+2, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +6, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +6.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (profession—sailor).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Studded leather, rapier, 2 daggers, 30 gp worth of jewelry, woolen coat, cotton scarf.

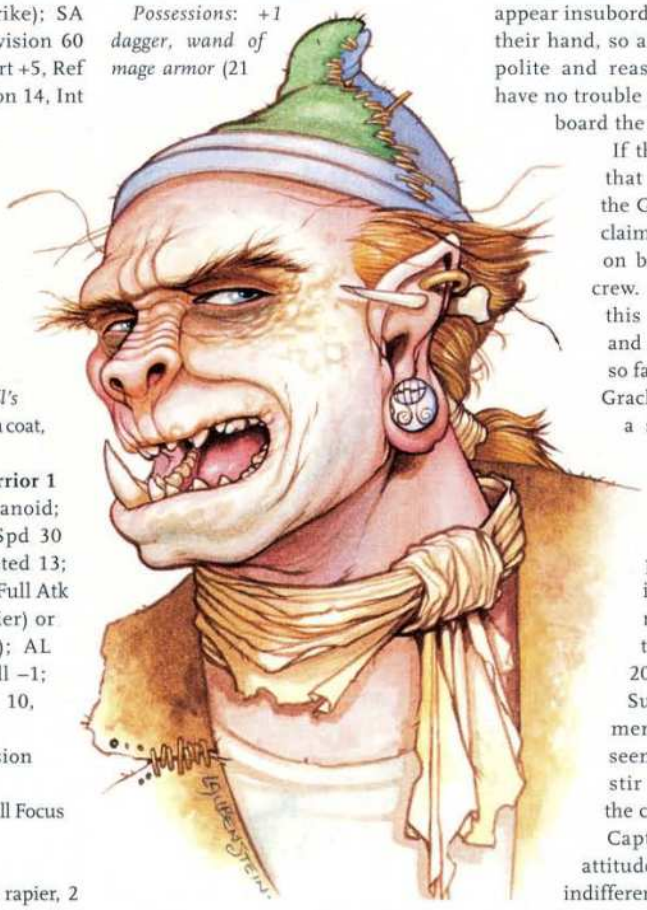
Jonas "The Grackle" Westman, male human rogue 3: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d6; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grap +3; Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2/19–20, *+1 dagger*); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, trap finding, trap sense +1; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Dex +5, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +3, Disable Device +8, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Forgery +8, Gather Information +9, Hide +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +8, Profession (sailor) +5, Search +8.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Stealthy.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Undercommon.

Possessions: *+1 dagger, wand of mage armor* (21 charges, stolen from Ulmoapop), masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork thieves tools, a belt with a hidden purse (Search DC 20) containing 25 pp, six steel vials each containing a single dose of oil of taggit, and a letter from Kilion Kresner guaranteeing his pay upon completion of the flumph relocation plan.



Dusky

Interacting with the Crew

As the PCs approach the *Angelina*, they are hailed by one of the sailors, who demands to know their business. Although Captain Sarim has no real qualms about allowing the PCs to board, Dusky and the crew members he's managed to sway to his cause are a bit more leery about the situation. Still, they don't want to appear insubordinate and possibly tip their hand, so as long as the PCs are polite and reasonable, they should have no trouble getting permission to board the ship.

If they announce the fact that they're looking for the Grackle, Captain Sarim claims that the only people on board the ship are his crew. As far as he knows, this is the truth—Dusky and his conspirators have so far managed to keep the Grackle's presence aboard a secret from the captain, so that when they spring their trap out at sea the rogue's surprise appearance during the mutiny can be more effective. Allow the PCs to make DC 20 Sense Motive checks. Success indicates that mention of the Grackle seems to cause a muted stir amongst some of the crew.

Captain Sarim's initial attitude toward the PCs is indifferent. His primary desire is to get the *Angelina* underway, and as long as the PCs stay on board they delay his departure. If made friendly (DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check) he'll agree to give the PCs a quick tour of the ship to prove to them that the Grackle isn't on board; otherwise he'll ask them with increasing ire to stop wasting his time.

Once the PCs reveal the fact that they know the Grackle is on board, Dusky grows nervous. If the captain isn't able to convince the PCs to leave, Dusky steps in and points out that

allowing the PCs to search the ship (under supervision, of course) might be the only way to convince them. In this case, he offers to supervise their search. The captain agrees to this solution with a cantankerous harrumph. If Dusky isn't able to prove to the PCs that the Grackle isn't on board, he instead tries to lead them into an ambush with the Grackle below decks. Of course, chances are that the Grackle plays his hand before the PCs get that far (see Event 5).

If the PCs bring Ulmoapop, the flumph's unusual appearance disturbs the sailors. Captain Sarim forbids the weird creature from setting "foot" on his ship, and Dusky immediately realizes that the PCs know too much and tries to get them below decks as detailed above. If the Grackle sees the flumph with the PCs, he immediately panics, as detailed in Event 5. For his part, Ulmoapop is immediately able to identify Dusky's voice as the same one he heard while he was in his crate.

The Grackle

Angelina Encounter Areas and Events

The *Angelina*'s main deck is fairly free of clutter, but it can still get fairly crowded with her crew of 20 sailors clambering around on deck and in the rigging. A set of three rowboats are kept in the middle of the deck, and the ship's wheel overlooks the main deck from a vantage point near the stern and above the captain's quarters. The Angelina is preparing to leave port as the PCs approach, so the majority of her crew are bustling about on deck or in the rigging. Captain Sarim and First Mate Dusky observe the preparations from a vantage point near the ship's wheel, while the Grackle hides out below decks in the hold.

As long as the ship is secure, the rocking motions of the waves are unfamiliar to landlubbers, but not especially distracting. Characters can move about on deck without having to make Balance checks.

A1. Captain's Quarters

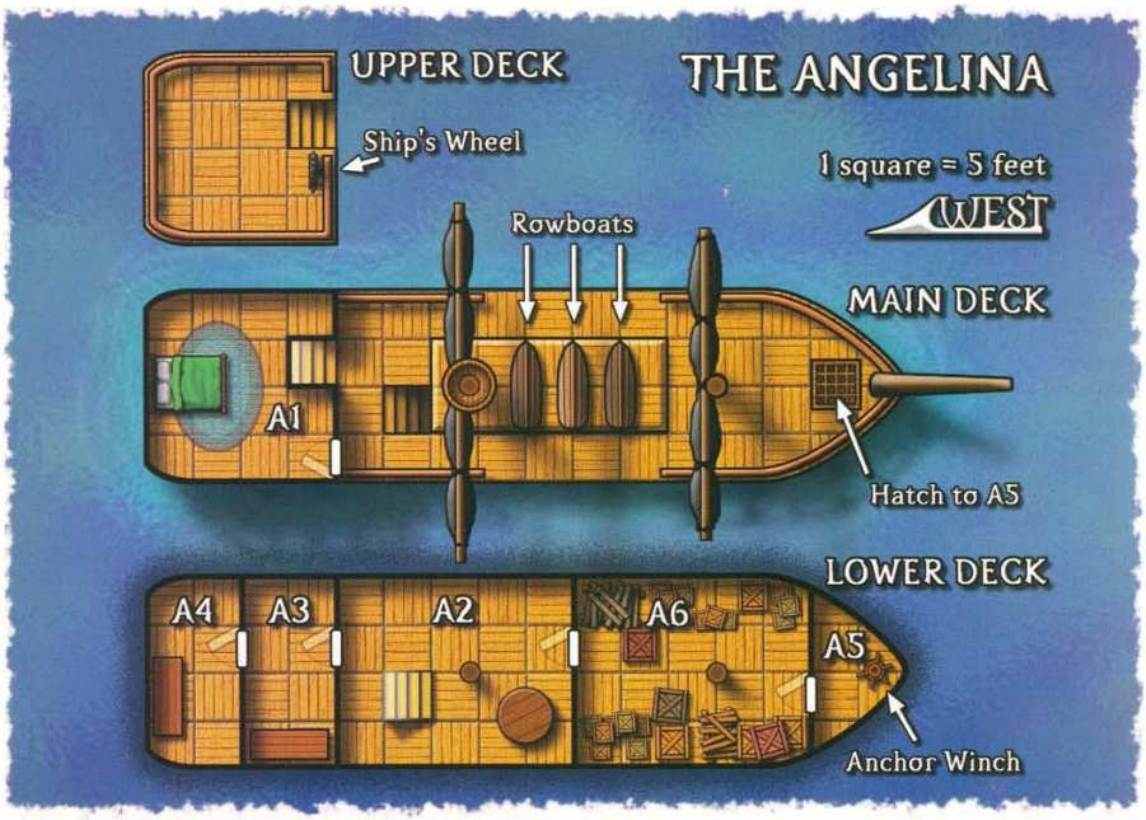
This room is modestly furnished and of ample size to comfortably accommodate one or two inhabitants. Curtained portals line the exterior walls, and several sea lanterns dangle on chains suspended from the ceiling. The room also features a chart desk, an armoire, and a double bed, all bolted to the floor. The sides of the bed are caged in with hammock netting.

The desk is a plain and worn slab mahogany with a large drawer that contains three feather pens, six vials of ink, some fine parchment, five candles, and a signet ring with the initials S.P. on it. Several coats and other articles of clothing hang in the armoire. On the floor of the armoire sits a small sea chest.

Treasure: The sea chest is unlocked and contains several maps, a lock of hair (belonging to Captain Sarim's mother), a handkerchief (from an old lover), and two shipping contracts for deals worth 500 gp and 750 gp apiece, payable on completion. A successful DC 20 Search check reveals a hidden slat in the back of the armoire that can be pulled aside to reveal a small scroll case that contains the title to the *Angelina* and a leather pouch that contains 200 gp of miscellaneous gemstones.

A2. Common Room

The stairs from the main deck lead into a medium-sized room that takes up the center rear of the ship. Low, built-in benches line the exterior walls in front of narrow rectangular tables bolted to the floor. The benches have hatches on them and double as storage compartments. A number of metal hooks for hanging hammocks line the ceiling.



Crewmembers tend to carry their valuables on their person, so the storage compartments contain nothing more than changes of clothes.

A3. Chart Room

This small room contains only a bench and table. Several large maps are pinned to the table, and hanging overhead on iron gimbals is an oil lamp. At the far end of the table a second set of gimbals holds a compass, near which is a small box containing more rolled-up maps, rulers, and a sextant.

A4. Galley

This cramped room contains a long worktable (bolted to the floor), beneath which are tied several boxes of pots and pans, large stirring spoons, and not a few different kinds of knives and cleavers. In the opposite corner sits a small coal box and a steel stove for heating rocks. A few large granite rocks sit on the floor next to a big iron pot holding a long pair of tongs. A barrel of seawater is lashed to a nearby strut and tied to it is a bucket with the word "Fire" painted on it.

A5. Anchor Room

This room is small and triangular-shaped. The walls are lined with pegs, hooks holding ropes, and several cargo nets stuffed with piles of bagged sails marked for mast placement, wind speed, and weather. Three small portals cut into both sidewalls display alternate views of splashing sea foam and empty sky. A larger winch wrapped with yards of thick rope and chain dominates the center of the room. A three-foot-square hatch is set in the ceiling.

The Grackle has been at work in here, in secret. After he holed up on the *Angelina* to avoid the thieves' guild, he realized that they might catch up to him on the ship before it left Stillsquall. To prepare for this eventuality, he used his Disable Device skill early this morning to sabotage the anchor winch. The winch still functions, but as a full-round action, the Grackle can pull a key pin that disengages the chain from the winch and allows it to spool out into the sea, setting the *Angelina* adrift. If the thieves' guild attacks the ship, he hopes to set her adrift in this manner and then escape amidst the resulting chaos; if things go right, the ship smashes on the rocks of Deadlight Rock and the guild assumes he died.

A successful Search check (DC 25) allows a character to discover the sabotage, and a successful Disable Device check (DC 25) repairs the winch. Unfortunately, the Grackle likely puts his plan

into motion long before the PCs have a chance to explore this room.

A6. Ship's Hold (EL 3)

Crates, boxes, and barrels form a maze in this poorly lit chamber, although it seems that the hold isn't quite as full as it could be. In the center of the hold, dried hams and other salted meats hang from the ceiling. The floorboards beneath them are stained with old drippings.

Normally, the hold is much more fully stocked, but with Stillsquall's salt mine having ceased production, only these crates of salted and smoked fish are being transported on this trip.

Crate: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 20.

Creatures: Four crates in the port bow section of the hold are stacked separate from the rest and are covered with a tarp. These crates contain the remaining four flumphs that the Grackle caught in the mines. He needs them to survive the trip, and has been intermittently feeding them salted fish and giving them water, but nevertheless, they are in dire shape from starvation and thirst. If the boxes are turned over (which is what happens if the *Angelina* hits Deadlight Rock), the flumphs can quickly escape by using their acid on the crates.

If the PCs release the flumphs, the creatures cower in the corner and whimper in Celestial. A character that speaks Celestial can calm them down with a successful DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check (if Ulmoapop is present, he can automatically calm the flumphs down). If the PCs can calm them, the flumphs accompany them meekly. Otherwise, they panic and begin spraying everything in sight with rancid fluid. One might even try to burn its way through the ship's hull with acid.

Flumphs (4): hp 11 each (each currently has 5 points of nonlethal damage from starvation and thirst); see Appendix.

Event 5: The Grackle Makes His Move (EL 3)

By now, the Grackle's been warned by his contacts in town that both the magistrate and the thieves' guild are after him. If he can't get away on the *Angelina*, the Grackle is prepared to sacrifice both her, the flumphs, and anyone else who happens to be on board in order to fake his own death and thus throw off any further pursuit as he flees the region. His plan involves sabotaging the ship and setting it adrift, allowing the harbor's powerful currents to quickly carry it into the nearby reef that surrounds Deadlight Rock.

During the day, the Grackle hides in the ship's anchor room. He spends the majority of his time watching out the two portholes—he immediately

suspects the approaching PCs are either magistrate or guild agents and panics, readying an action to cut lose the anchor (see area **A5**) as soon as he hears anyone enter the lower decks or approach the hatch above. Once the anchor is cut, the current grabs the *Angelina* immediately. A successful DC 15 Profession (sailor) or Spot check is enough for a character to notice that the *Angelina* is adrift—the captain automatically notices the ship is adrift in four rounds.

Once the *Angelina* is set adrift, things can quickly grow complicated and dangerous, especially for a 1st-level party. The progression of events once the ship is set adrift are outlined below.

- **Round 0**: The Grackle cuts the anchor loose as detailed above.
- **Round 1**: The Grackle opens the door to area **A6** and approaches the stack of flumph crates.
- **Round 2**: The Grackle topples the upper flumph crate over, then moves back into area **A5**. The flumph within starts to burn through the crate with its acid, dealing 1d4 points of damage to the crate per round (remember, acid ignores hardness). A flumph can burn through a crate in four rounds with average acid damage.
- **Round 3**: The Grackle opens the hatch in the ceiling and sneaks up to complete his sabotage of the ship's rigging, using a key rope he tied off near the bow. He takes 10 on his Move Silently and Hide checks, but still might be spotted by the PCs, the captain, or one of the sailors. Remember to account for distance penalties of –1 per 10 feet when making Listen and Spot checks.
- **Round 4**: Captain Sarim realizes the ship is adrift, and orders his crew to raise the sails. The sails unfurl, catch the wind, and then tear loose of their lines spectacularly, throwing the entire crew into a panic. Given 2d4+2 rounds, the crew can bring the sails back under control, but chances are that combat breaks out on board well before then. Each character that aids the crew with a successful DC 12 Use Rope check reduces the amount of time required to bring the sails under control by 1 round; if enough PCs aid, they might be able to save the *Angelina* from her fate. The Grackle remains hidden near the bow this round.
- **Round 5**: The Grackle uses the chaos as cover to sneak over to a rowboat and begins to untie it. This takes him 2 rounds, during which a DC 15 Spot check is enough for a character to notice him. The sailors are generally too busy to do anything about him if they notice him, but if Captain Sarim sees him he immediately accosts the Grackle.
- **Round 6**: The flumph escapes its crate. Scared and disoriented, it sprays the hold with its rancid bile. The smell quickly permeates the *Angelina*, and all creatures on board must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12) or become sickened. The strange smell causes most of the crew to grow even more confused and demoralized.
- **Round 7**: The *Angelina* is carried into breaking surf near Deadlight Rock. Everyone on board automatically realizes the ship is adrift at this point, and must make DC 10 Balance checks each round to keep their footing. The remaining flumph crates topple over, and the freed flumph starts to aid in rescuing his kin. The lacedons on Deadlight Rock notice the *Angelina's* approach and prepare to investigate it. The Grackle loads the oars for the other two rowboats into his boat, preventing their immediate use in pursuing him.
- **Round 8**: The *Angelina* briefly hits a shallow outcropping and jolts everyone on board. All creatures in contact with the ship must make a DC 12 Reflex save or be knocked prone. If he remains upright, the Grackle deploys his rowboat and leaves the *Angelina*. Otherwise, he escapes on the next round. He begins rowing away from the doomed ship at a speed of 15 feet. He makes for a somewhat distant outcropping 500 feet away to the south of Stillsquall.
- **Round 9**: Another flumph escapes and sprays down the hold; all creatures on board must make another DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid becoming sickened.
- **Round 10**: The remaining two flumphs escape. Each sprays down the hold, requiring two more DC 12 Fortitude saves to avoid sickening.
- **Round 11**: The *Angelina* hits Deadlight Rock and the hull is holed in Area **A6**. The lacedons board the ship, two through the hole into area **A6**, two over the port deck near the rowboats, and two over the bow. They attack humanoids at random, but do not pursue any fleeing characters more than 100 feet from Deadlight Rock.
- **Round 12**: The *Angelina* begins to break apart over the course of the next 10 rounds. Characters still on board must make a DC 12 Reflex save every round to avoid being pitched into the water.

Creatures: The lacedons that lurk in the waters off Deadlight Rock rarely leave their lair, content to lurk in the murky, seaweed-clogged pools that surround the barren islet. Every once in a while, one of them nabs a fisherman or lone swimmer that comes too close to their lair, but for the most part the undead rely on the harbor's strong currents to wash up the bodies of drowned sailors or murder victims that have been tossed into the sea on dark nights for their meals.

Lacedons (6): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 119.

Tactics: If anyone (PCs, Captain Sarim, or any of the sailors) notices and accosts the Grackle, things go from bad to worse. The Grackle reacts to confrontations in one way—by whipping out his dagger and stabbing whoever is in his way. Once the Grackle attacks, Dusky and those sailors who are loyal to him (9 of the 18 sailors) come to his aid, and an all-out melee quickly ensues.

When running a large combat like this, it's best to focus on those battles that directly involve the PCs. Make sure to intersperse the action with mention of other sailors fighting each other in the background, but for the most part, you need only focus on those NPCs that the PCs are fighting themselves. Remember that the Grackle and Dusky are tough opponents for 1st-level PCs. Feel free to provide some support to PCs in the form of a few friendly sailors or even Captain Sarim himself if things start to look dicey.

If things progress to the point where the lacedons of Deadlight Rock become involved, attack the PCs with only two of the undead at a time while the remaining undead fight with any surviving sailors or flumphs.

Development: This climactic encounter can play out in a number of ways, but the PCs' eventual goal should be to capture the Grackle, dead or alive. If the *Angelina* runs aground on the rocks and breaks apart, there should be enough large fragments for the survivors to cling to. Help is only a few minutes away; not long after the *Angelina* crashes, a nearby ship called the *Selina* arrives to rescue survivors and take them back to Stillsquall.

Concluding the Adventure

Ideally the PCs survive the potential disaster of being set adrift and deal adequately with the Grackle, the mutineers, and the lacedons. If the PCs played a significant role in preventing the *Angelina's* destruction, Sarim offers them either free passage in the future to a port of their choice, or a flat sum of 500 gp.

In the meantime, the local thieves' guild remains interested in the Grackle. If he escapes, they might consider paying the PCs to hunt him down for them. On the other hand, they might blame the PCs' interference for his escape, and might take violent action against the party if they stay in town. If the PCs capture the Grackle, both the magistrate and the thieves' guild are willing to pay a bounty for him; a guild agent tries to contact the PCs before they deliver their prisoner and offers a bounty of 600 gp for him. PCs who agree to this might find themselves in trouble with the magistrate, of course, and may even be put on trial for obstruction of justice.

If the Grackle escapes, he flees to a nearby city and lays low for several months. He's a vindictive and surly soul, and likely plots revenge on any slights he may feel the PCs have caused him. He certainly holds them responsible for ruining a profitable arrangement with his flumph-smuggling operation.

As for the flumphs, the strange creatures find themselves both out of place and uncomfortable in human society. If they become public knowledge, they are treated as freaks and curiosities. If the PCs explain how their presence in the salt mines was causing problems, the flumphs become apologetic and genuinely ashamed, yet the fact remains that they still need a home. Finding a place that is both safe enough and tolerant enough of the strange creatures could form the theme of a unique campaign arc.

Appendix

Flumph

Tiny Aberration
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 5 ft. (1 square), fly 15 (poor)
Armor Class: 16 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 13)
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/–9
Attack: Tentacles +6 melee (1d4–2 plus 1d4 acid)
Full Attack: Tentacles +6 melee (1d4–2 plus 1d4 acid)
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Acidic tentacles, plummeting charge, rancid spurt
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., helplessness, resistance to acid 10
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 6, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +13, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spot +3, Survival +3
Feats: Great Fortitude, Hover[B], Weapon Finesse[B]
Environment: Any temperate or underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3–6), or tribe (7–18)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful good
Advancement: 3–4 HD (Tiny), 5–6 HD (Small)
Level Adjustment: +2

This strange creature is shaped like a pale greenish-yellow disk the size of barrel lid. In the center of the disk is a twitching orifice adjoined by a pair of four-inch eyestalks. A shock of reedy spikes and thin rubbery tentacles trail from the creature's underbelly.

The flumph is a tiny creature whose bizarre anatomy somewhat resembles a cross between a large porcelain saucer and a jellyfish. The flumph's body is shockingly light; the majority of its weight comes from the nest of spikes trailing from its lower surface. A flumph can travel slowly over the ground by pulling itself with its tentacles, but it prefers to fly by constantly drawing air through its body to buoy itself up, using its body as a natural parachute. This mode of flight is somewhat clumsy, but still grants the creature greater mobility than its land speed.

Despite its unusual appearance, the flumph is an intelligent creature. Flumphs generally live together in small, strictly structured families, or more rarely, tribes of 2–3 families. They are nomadic creatures, and their tribal structure dictates specific roles for each member. Some are selected as hunters, others as guardians for their current home, some as entertainers, some as explorers, and so on. They are shy creatures and tend to avoid interaction with other intelligent beings; many flumph tribes live amongst other societies and are never even noticed.

The average flumph is just over 2 feet in diameter but only weighs about 4 pounds. Their white saucer-shaped bodies are thin and remarkably resilient. Flumphs can eat animal and vegetable matter, but prefer to eat minerals (especially salt) that have been broken down into a thick sludge by their acidic tentacles. They absorb this sludge through the hollow spikes that hang from their undersides. Flumphs have no sense of smell.

All flumphs can speak Celestial, although a few are bright enough to have also learned Common.

Combat

Flumphs are poor fighters and aren't known for aggression. Nevertheless, they have several effective methods of defending themselves. In combat, a flumph's first instinct is to spray attackers with a spurting stream of vile smelling fluid. If this doesn't work, the flumph either flees or tries to get into a position above its enemy so it can use its plummeting charge attack. A flumph denied these options flails at enemies with its short tentacles. Although these tentacles do little physical damage, the acid they ooze more than makes up for it.

Acidic Tentacles (Ex): Acid damage from a flumph's tentacle or plummeting charge is considered to be continual damage for purposes of disrupting spellcasting. Additionally, the acid continues to burn for 1 point of acid damage per round for 1d4 rounds. Damage from multiple acid attacks is cumulative, and the duration of the continual damage from each attack should be determined separately. The acid can be negated with a thorough flushing with water (requiring a full round action or total immersion) or a successful Heal check (DC 18).

Plummeting Charge (Ex): A flumph that charges an opponent from an initial position directly above the target can attack with its spikes as a +8 melee attack (this includes the +2 bonus for charging). A hit indicates the flumph stabs its spikes deeply into the target for 1d8 damage plus 1d4 acid damage. This attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity from the target. After a successful plummeting charge, the flumph immediately detaches and moves into any adjacent square next to the target.

Rancid Spurt (Ex): Once per day, a flumph can spurt a spray of foul fluid in a 20-foot cone. The nasty fluid clings to any material it touches and continues to reek for 1d4 hours. Upon being initially struck by the fluid, a creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or become nauseated for 2d4 rounds and sickened for 2d4 rounds after that. The stench of the fluid is so overwhelming that any creature within a 100-ft radius of an area, creature, or object so tainted must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or become sickened for 2d4 rounds. A creature that successfully saves is immune to the smell for 24 hours.

Helplessness (Ex): A flumph that is flipped over becomes helpless, disoriented, and falls to the ground. While flipped over, a flumph cannot exude acid from its tentacles—it can barely move and talk. It can attempt to right itself once per day by making a successful DC 20 Escape Artist check, but otherwise the creature is stuck until an ally flips it back over. A flumph can be flipped with a successful trip attack, or by failing its Fortitude save when exposed to high wind.

John writes, "Among my friends, my flumph reverance is no small secret. However after a fellow gamer ridiculed my favorite creature for its overall uselessness and utter ridiculousness, I became determined to reintroduce the flumph to the core audience. Thankfully, he has since retracted his anti-flumph statements because whether or not we choose to admit it, there's a little flumph in all of us."

MOUNT ZOGON
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY BATHING SUIT?
FLATTERING. WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
REMEMBER THAT PALADIN WHO TIED ME UP AND TRIED TO CONVERT ME — BUT I WRIGGLED LOOSE AND INFLICTED SWIFT, LETHAL REVENGE? UNDER ALL THAT PALADIN-ARMOR, ÜBER-FANCY SWIMWEAR!!
WOW!
I ALTERED IT TO FIT, OF COURSE. HE WAS MUCH BIGGER THAN ME.
HE? THAT PALADIN WAS A MALE?
OH, YES. I CAN ATTEST TO THAT.
BY TONY MOSELEY
ZOGONIA.COM

Shadow of the Abyss

BY GREG A. VAUGHAN

- Illustrations by Chad Du Lac, James Ryman, and UDON with Kevin Yan and Jim Zubkavich
- Cartography by Peter Whitley and Robert Lazzaretti

Any Setting • Mid-level (6–12) • Urban, Temperate Wilderness & Dungeon Crawl

On the reach between the shattered land of Sterich and the giant-held Jotens and Crystalmist Mountains stand the border forts. These ancient strongholds once contained the giant menace in the forbidding mountains beyond, yet they have, in recent years, fallen to the very creatures they were built to repulse. Now, these one-time bastions of civilization are in the oversized hands of the enemy, an enemy that even now prepares for a monstrous invasion of a nation already on its knees.

"Shadow of the Abyss" is the second adventure in the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc that began last issue and continues in DUNGEON #119 with "Wrath of the Abyss." "City of Shadows" concerns the fate of star-crossed Istivin, a city haunted by a malevolent Abyssal entity. DUNGEON #117 contains a detailed background for Istivin, but since little of the action in this adventure takes place within the city walls, the information in that article is not necessary to play "Shadow of the Abyss." As with the first adventure, "Touch of the Abyss," this adventure has an alternate beginning and ending which allow it to be run as a stand-alone adventure.

"Shadow of the Abyss" is designed for four 11th-level characters, and although any combination of classes can be used, characters with good offensive capabilities and good healing resources are especially beneficial, as the adventure contains several challenging combat encounters. The PCs should accumulate enough experience mid-way through this adventure to advance to 12th level. As some of the final encounters in "Shadow of the Abyss" are quite challenging, you should allow the PCs to advance in level as soon as they've accumulated enough experience.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Sterich existed for centuries in the shadow of the great western mountains, and faced countless dangers spawned above and below those frozen peaks. Incursions of giant raiders were always a problem, but one the Border Companies could handle. That is, until organized giant attacks began in earnest eighteen years ago. These attacks overwhelmed the Border Companies, and a foul curse fell upon the capital city of Istivin. The entire citadel of the earl and a good portion of the city was swallowed in an immense black hemisphere. This black dome was part of a plot by the demon-queen Lolth to absorb

the world into her layer of the Abyss. It took the timely intervention of a stalwart band of adventurers to defeat the giants and avert Lolth's plans. These events are described in the AD&D 1st Edition game adventure *GDQ 1–7 Queen of the Spiders*.

Ten years ago danger again threatened to consume Sterich as swarms of savage humanoids led by the Giant King Galmoor invaded the earldom. Sterich was overrun as its population was slaughtered or forced to flee. The earl's court abandoned Istivin, relocating itself to the neighboring kingdom of Keoland. It took two full years to liberate Sterich and re-establish its monarchy. Yet unlike the rest of the cities and towns in Sterich, which had been occupied and razed, Istivin remained intact. There was no sign that Galmoor the giant-king and his occupying armies had ever been there. Querchard, promoted to marquis by the King of Keoland, returned to Istivin with his court and began rebuilding. But today the city seems troubled—tempers flare with shocking suddenness, people vanish off the streets at night, and the very shadows seem to conspire against the light. Yet all this reflects only public knowledge, for Istivin is in fact still under siege.

The city's grim situation began with Lolth's invasion eighteen years ago. When the Demon Queen of Spiders partially absorbed Istivin into the Abyss, she unwittingly allowed an ancient and powerful Abyssal entity known as the Malgoth to enter the city. Little more than a disembodied intelligence bound to a seething, formless hatred, the Malgoth's physical body had been destroyed in ages past by a consortium of jealous demon lords. For eons it waited, slowly reorganizing and rebuilding itself. Still without physical substance, the Malgoth crept undetected into Istivin through Lolth's portal and settled into the very stones of the city's streets. After the black sphere was destroyed the Malgoth remained behind, a shadowy parasite in the hidden places of a wounded city.

Years later, when Sterich fell to the giants, King Galamoor's retinue included a frost giant cleric named Ilkharis. A worshiper of Kostchtchie (the favored demon lord of frost giants and all things frozen), Ilkharis served Galmoor as his chief advisor. Ilkharis soon sensed the Malgoth's presence in the form of particularly lucid dreams, and was able to contact the entity using his spells. Discovering what he believed to be an imprisoned demon prince, Ilkharis swore loyalty and, at the Malgoth's bidding, had his underlings seize King Galmoor in the dead of night. The giant-king was brought to the city square, where Ilkharis sacrificed him in a complex ritual designed to allow the Malgoth to use the giant-king's body as a focus for its essence, similar to a lich's phylactery. The giant's corpse was absorbed into the ground, and the savage humanoid armies, overcome with fear, fled into the countryside. Ilkharis left Istivin as well, to allow the Malgoth to grow and gather its power undisturbed.

When the forces of Sterich reoccupied the city, they found it hauntingly deserted. Though they celebrated its liberation, a new sense of despair and bitterness pervaded the atmosphere. Good will disappeared among neighbors, and tempers flared unaccountably into violence. Petty nobles and con artists began to greedily grab up lands and titles lost to others who had fallen during the war, contributing to the overall tension. Today mysterious accidents and deaths occur with alarming frequency, and incidences of madness are on the rise. Many people have disappeared in the night, including Marquis Querchard. The streets are deserted after dark. All of this is due to the Malgoth's dark influence.

Today a state of underworld warfare exists between the Malgoth's minions and a band of drow who have their own designs on the city. The drow have managed to invade Istivin under deep cover identities, but the Malgoth is gaining power and is rooting them out. All of this occurs beyond the knowledge of the general population and only adds to the mystery and violence that haunts Istivin.

The Story So Far

In the previous adventure, "Touch of the Abyss," the party helped several town guards deal with what at first seemed to be an insane sorcerer. The "sorcerer" turned out to be a possessed guard from the Deeper Dungeons below Istivin's Krelont Keep. The sage Algorthas contacted the party, and voiced his concerns that this attack may indicate that the source of the troubles plaguing Istivin could be hidden in the Deeper Dungeons. With the aboveground portion of the keep closed to visitors, the PCs were forced to infiltrate the Deeper Dungeons via an obscure escape tunnel accessed from the city's sewer. They found the Deeper Dungeons haunted by demons and shadowy undead. Worse, they found the missing Marquis Querchard, possessed by some evil entity and apparently the force behind the slaughter of the guards in the Deeper Dungeons. After defeating the possessed marquis, they learned of the Malgoth from Querchard journals, including the fact that the Abyssal entity had been granted its power via a powerful ritual led by a frost giant cleric named Ilkharis.

KEY TO THE CITY OF ISTIVIN

1. Javan Gate
2. Brink's Gate
3. Trade Gate
4. East Citadel
5. West Citadel
6. Krelont Keep
7. The House of Tabard (shabby inn)
8. The Gryphon's Arms (expensive inn)
9. House of Radiance (Pelor)
10. The Gilded House (Zilchus)
11. The Maiden's Shield (Mayaheine)
12. The Tower of Custom (Allitur)
13. Algorthas the Seer's Manor
14. Barclay House
15. The Old Livery
16. Qualtaine Square
17. The Effluvium
18. Chapterhouse of the Star
19. The Circus
20. Oliphant House (vacant demense)
21. Ancient Stone Circle
22. The Fiddling Viceroy (standard inn)
23. The Dwarven Court
24. Shrine (Ehlonna)
25. North Square
26. Temple (Fharlanghn)
27. Temple (Heironeous)
28. Temple (Ulaa)
29. Gate Square

Adventure Synopsis

The party learns that their friend Algorthas the Seer is missing, possibly when they come to report to him about their success or failure in the prior adventure. Clues point them to Istivin's temple of Pelor, and upon investigating the cathedral they are ambushed by one of the Malgoth's

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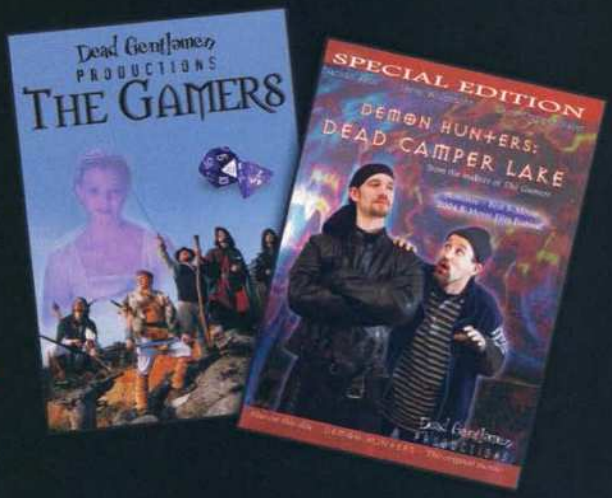

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powerful allies, an otherworldly menace called Chrylis. This creature abducted Algorthas in an attempt to learn what the sage knew of the Malgoth and to whom he had conveyed this information. Chrylis eventually planned to transform the sage into one of his own warped minions. After rescuing Algorthas, the PCs learn that the frost giant cleric Ilkharis now leads a band of giants that occupies one of Sterich's old border forts to the south.

Traveling south to find out how to undo the Malgoth ritual from its creator, the PCs find the fort occupied by hill and frost giants. They also discover that a powerful hill giant cleric of Erythnul has usurped control of the band, and he must be defeated in order to reach the prison deep in the fort that supposedly contains Ilkharis. Alas, upon reaching the fort's prison the party finds Ilkharis gone—and in his stead they find a drow agent. The adventure ends as the party learns that the drow hiding beneath Istivin have made a trade with the hill giant for Ilkharis. The drow have taken him captive back to the city, to what fell purpose none can tell.

Adventure Hooks

If you're playing "Shadow of the Abyss" as part of the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc, this adventure begins not long after the party emerges from the dungeons beneath Krelont Keep. They should have learned of the Malgoth's presence in the city, and that the frost giant cleric Ilkharis is the key to its destruction. Of course, locating Ilkharis poses a problem; there are no easily accessible records or sources of information about the giant cleric. There are, however, two obvious ways to find Ilkharis: the PCs can employ powerful divination magic, or they can consult the sage Algorthas the Seer. These avenues are explored below at the start of Chapter One.

This adventure can also be run for a party that has not previously played "Touch of the Abyss." In this case, the Malgoth's role in the adventure becomes a minor subplot; the focus of "Shadow of the Abyss" is instead a foray against one of the giant-held border forts to the south.

The General Commander of the Army of the March, **Terpin Griffage** (LN male human ranger 10), has plans to send forays against the giants and savage humanoids of the Crystalmists and the Jotens. To accomplish this, he must first secure the border forts that were abandoned during the invasion ten years ago, to protect the flanks of his forces. Unfortunately, many of these forts remain occupied by creatures allied with the giants. His army is spread thin and is under the direct control of disparate nobles who are currently vying for political power, so he lacks the resources to begin such a campaign. One border fort in particular is in a key location. Rumored to be controlled by a giant who is some sort of fanatical religious leader, Terpin feels this fort is a lynchpin for the giants, and that if its leader could be removed it would weaken the giant alliance. To this end he seeks to hire a group of accomplished adventurers who might be interested in such a foray for a reward suitable to your campaign.

If you run the adventure in this way, start with Chapter Two.

CHAPTER ONE: FINDING ILKHARIS

By this point the party knows that a sinister force known as the Malgoth is at work in Istivin, and that it seems to be impervious to any attempt to divine its nature or location. However, they do have a tantalizing clue: the name Ilkharis. The frost giant bound the Malgoth to Istivin, so he should know how to release it. Since there is obviously no giant by that name currently residing in Istivin, the party must look beyond the city walls for their quarry.

Any attempt to scry on the giant fails, as Ilkharis is currently being held in a warded location. Likewise, a *discern location* won't work, since the PCs have neither seen him nor do they possess any of his belongings. *Legend lore* or *vision* can provide some information about Ilkharis (namely, that he serves Kostchtchie as a cleric, that he once served King Galmoor as a favored advisor, and that he rules a tribe of giants in an ancient border fort along the southern Sterich border near the Jotens), but these spells can't pinpoint the exact fort, nor do they reveal that the real Ilkharis is imprisoned by the drow deep below Istivin (since this information is hidden, and hardly legendary as a result). *Divination* should provide the PCs with gentle guidance to investigate the border forts to the south, perhaps in the form of the following verse:

"Old Guardians of the South still stand,
Now serving the will of a giant's hand."

A successful Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check (DC 15) reveals that "Guardians of the South" is a little-known phrase that used to refer to the ancient border forts in the shadow of the Jotens that once served Sterich as the first line of defense against incursions from the giant-infested mountains. A map of the Sterich region can be purchased in Istivin for 5 gp, and the PCs can use this map to determine the locations of the various border forts and to plan their investigation and journey south.

Finally, *commune* or *contact other plane* can reveal detailed information about their goal, depending on what kind of questions the PCs ask. Try to phrase the answers to these questions in a way that steers the PCs toward the border fort to the south. If the PCs try to use these spells to determine Ilkharis's location at the start of the adventure, the results should still point them toward the border fort. The prisoner exchange between the giants and the drow takes place at about the same time as this adventure begins, so it's fair to assume that Ilkharis is still imprisoned in the border fort (if only for a few more hours) when the PCs use such tactics.

Of course, parties without access to powerful divination magic must rely on less exotic methods of research to learn where the frost giant has relocated. A successful DC 15 Gather Information check points them toward Algorthas the Seer, the city's most learned sage; no one else in town seems to recognize the name Ilkharis. The PCs may have even received a summons from the seer at the end of their prior adventure.

Unfortunately, when the PCs arrive at Algorthas' manor just outside the city walls, they find that he's not home. His servants know only that he received a message earlier in the day and left immediately without saying a word. This isn't unusual; the Seer often wanders off for days at a time without alerting anyone. The servants and hired guards are

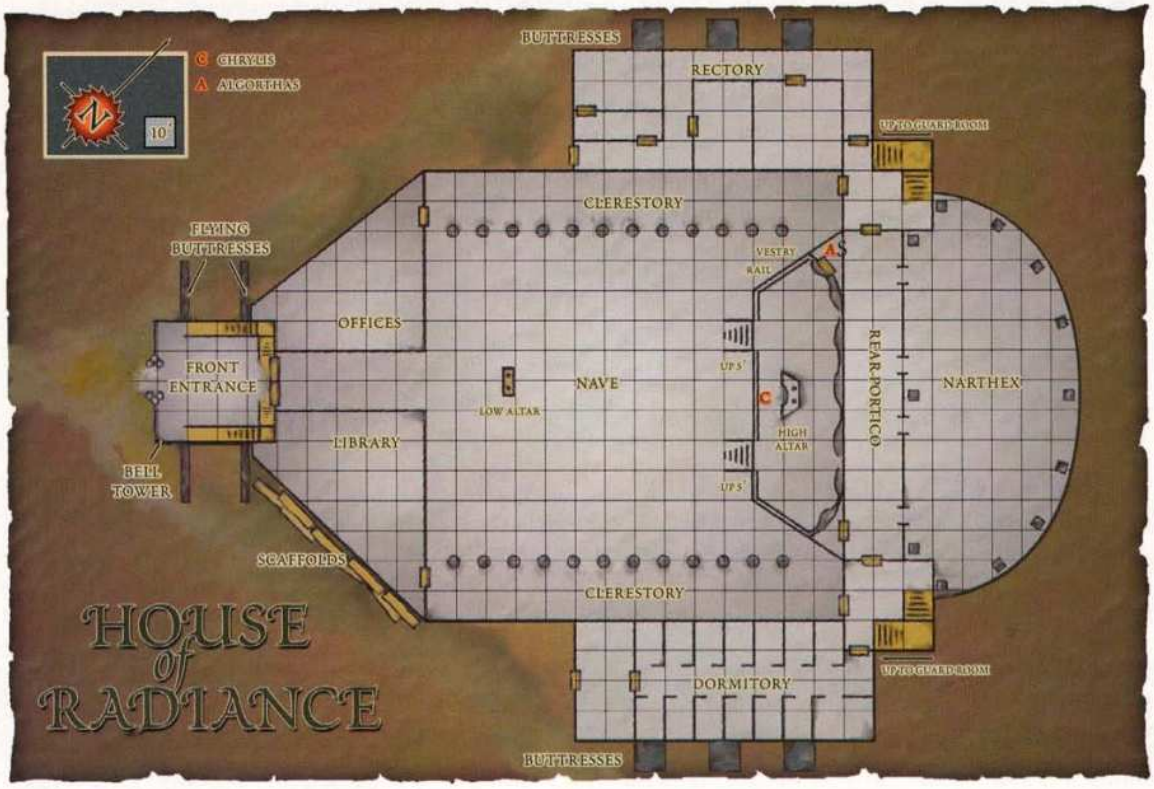
apologetic, but genuinely can't help the PCs. The best they can do is take their names and addresses and promise that they'll let Algorthas know they're looking for him once he returns home.

The Missing Seer

When the PCs struck a blow against the Malgoth at the end of "Touch of the Abyss," the Abyssal entity realized fully that its return to physicality was seriously threatened. It retaliated immediately by transforming several statues into dangerous gargoyle-like monsters, yet it knew the PCs were strong enough that these gargoyles were unlikely to succeed in stopping them. Its wretched psychic screams of frustration and anger went unheard save by those few who had been closely touched by the creature. Ilkharis heard it in his cell and despaired that his master needed his aid, yet he was powerless to provide it.

Unfortunately for the PCs, one other heard the psychic wail of anguish, one who could act on a moment's notice. This was the vile arcanist known as Chrylis, a once-human sorcerer who stumbled upon a remote portal to the alien and insane Far Realm, a dimension of nightmare hidden beyond the rim of the known Multiverse. Transformed horribly by this realm into a mockery of humanity known as a kaorti, Chrylis returned to the Material Plane determined to spread the eldritch gift of the Far Realm to his one-time kin. Chrylis soon learned that his unnatural new form rebelled against the natural world, and he was forced to wear a suit of rubbery resin to shield him from the ravages of nature.

All this may seem like a tall order for a single creature, but Chrylis is both patient and potent. He spent several decades wandering the world, lurking in its shadows and seeking other places where the boundary between the Material Plane and the Far Realm had worn thin. Amongst other locations, he found just such a place in Sterich; Lolth's attempt to absorb its capital city eighteen years ago had wrought havoc on the dimensional stability of the area, and Chrylis quickly located the epicenter of this taint as the city of Istivin. He doesn't serve the Malgoth directly; his mind is too alien and disjointed for the Abyssal entity to influence. Yet Chrylis felt the opportunity posed by the Malgoth. He reasoned that, should the Malgoth achieve its evolution to physicality, the boundaries between dimensions would weaken even further, perhaps to the point where Chrylis could establish another permanent portal to the Far Realm. For several months, Chrylis lurked in the shadows of Istivin in an abandoned building near the House of Radiance, Istivin's imposing temple of Pelor. It didn't take long for the kaorti to note that the cathedral of Pelor was woefully understaffed; only an old man and three acolytes remained to tend the often empty structure. Chrylis waited for the opportune moment to strike, and within a week of his arrival in Istivin he had all four of the clerics under his control. He allowed the clerics to maintain their normal lives and conduct business as usual, but forbade them to speak of him and used them every now and then as pawns for his needs as they arose.



Faith being a hard thing to come by these days in Istivin, there are hardly enough worshipers of late to notice the somber shadow that has fallen over high priest Kireth Trantle and his acolytes.

When the Malgoth screamed at the end of the prior adventure, Chrylis used *contact other plane* to determine the cause of the great psychic wail; from the spell's results he learned that a group of adventurers had slain the Malgoth's Voice (the possessed Marquis Querchard). This spell's revelations also encouraged him to pay a visit to Algorthas the Seer. Chrylis did so immediately, first using *prying eyes* to scout the manor out, then using *dimension door* to invade Algorthas's study. One *dominate person* later and Algorthas was eating out of his hand. From the dominated sage, Chrylis learned that the PCs were the only characters to whom the sage had confided his worries. The kaorti returned to the House of Radiance with Algorthas and immediately began to plan an ambush to remove the PCs from the scene.

If the PCs try to locate Algorthas, they'll have no luck unless they resort to magic; no one in town has seen the sage for at least a day. Even magic is unreliable; Chrylis has placed a *nondetection* spell on Algorthas—as a result, any attempt to magically locate the sage must succeed on a DC 24 caster level check. Algorthas currently waits for the kaorti's orders in the northern vestry of the House of Radiance.

If the party does not seek out the sage, they receive a message the next evening in the form of a note written in blood on a page torn from a Pelorian holy text. The message is addressed to each of the party members, and reads, "I have the Seer. Meet me at midnight at the House of Radiance, that we might parley. Come alone. Bring anyone else and Algorthas goes to the Far Realm." A Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 30) is enough to recognize the reference to the Far Realm for what it is.

Shadows in the House of Radiance (EL 13)

The Temple of Pelor in Istivin has seen better days. Sections of its façade, which bears dozens of angelic noble statues, have been falling free lately, and at least one such crumbling has already ended in tragedy for those unfortunate enough to be below at the time. Scaffolding along the temple's outer walls testifies to the slow repair of the façade by workers. At night, guttering torches flicker in the vaulted archway beneath the bell tower and reveal that the front doors are standing wide open, most unusual for the late hour.

There are many possible entrances to the temple, but exploration reveals the same thing; all the rooms of the temple are strangely empty and silent, with the exception of the Nave. No matter when the PCs arrive in the cathedral's nave, day or night, the place looks the same.

The temple nave is shrouded in shadows, all the many sconces and mirrored surfaces designed to reflect and magnify the sun's rays now veiled in swaths of darkness. Before the high altar, a lone ring of light from a tall candelabrum illuminates a singular figure. It is tall and impossibly emaciated, completely swathed in form-fitting black leathery armor. A featureless leathern mask covers its head, sealed down the center with black stitching. There are no obvious eye or breathing holes. At your approach it raises an elongated arm ending in a four-fingered hand, a hand with fingers that writhe like blind, hungry worms. A voice emerges from beneath the mask like gurgling mush flowing over a rotting tongue, "Welcome to the House of Shadow."

Creature: This otherworldly creature is Chrylis. The kaorti is supremely confident that the PCs pose no threat to him, but before he attempts to kill them, he wants to be sure that they haven't revealed their knowledge of the Malgoth to anyone else. He remains calm, despite any threats the PCs may make, and if asked about Algorthas, or the clerics of Pelor, he says only that they are in a safe place. Before he agrees to release them, Chrylis demands to know if they have told anyone else about their discoveries in the Deeper Dungeons. He calmly listens to their answers, but as he does so he observes their actions and position in the room.

In truth, Chrylis doesn't trust the PCs, and nothing they can say prevents him from eventually attacking. He waits only for the PCs to let their guard down before attempting to catch as many of them as possible in the area of a *mass suggestion* spell, suggesting that the PCs tell him who they've really told about the Malgoth. Once satisfied with their magically compelled answers (or once they attack), the kaorti sorcerer makes every effort to slay them all.

Since the natural environs of the Material Plane are poison to kaorti, Chrylis wears a form-fitting suit of protective resin that resembles body-tight leather armor. Strips of the same resin enshroud its head. The kaorti's motions are slithery and undulant. If his suit is removed, Chrylis's body is revealed to be alien in form, with semi-transparent skin of brownish green, pinks, and purples that seems to flow over his frame in an almost liquid manner. His face resembles that of a melted spider's, and his palms excrete a greenish resin—the same resin that he used to fashion his suit and his weapon. As the natural world brings pain to Chrylis, the kaorti has never summoned a familiar.

Chrylis casts *false life*, *greater magic weapon* (on his ribbon dagger), *protection from arrows*, and *nondetection* on himself every day; the effects of these spells are included in his stat block below when appropriate. Additionally, he has cast *nondetection* on Algorthas. As a result, his spells available per day when the PCs encounter him have been adjusted accordingly.

Chrylis, male kaorti sorcerer 12: CR 13; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 2d8 plus 12d4; hp 54 (39 without *false life*); Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8; Grp +7; Atk +15 melee (1d4+2/19–20/×4, *+3 keen ribbon dagger*); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d4+2/19–20/×4, *+3 keen ribbon dagger*); SA spell-like abilities, spells, vile transformation; SQ damage reduction 10/magic against ranged attacks, darkvision 60 ft., Material vulnerability, outsider traits, poison immunity; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 9, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 27.

Skills: Bluff +22, Concentration +17, Craft (armorsmith) +16, Craft (weaponsmith) +17, Diplomacy +10, Heal +12, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +20,

Knowledge (the planes) +8, Spellcraft +22, Survival +4 (+6 on other planes), Use Magic Device +13.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (ribbon dagger)[B], Improved Disarm, Resinbond, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Kaorti, Sylvan.

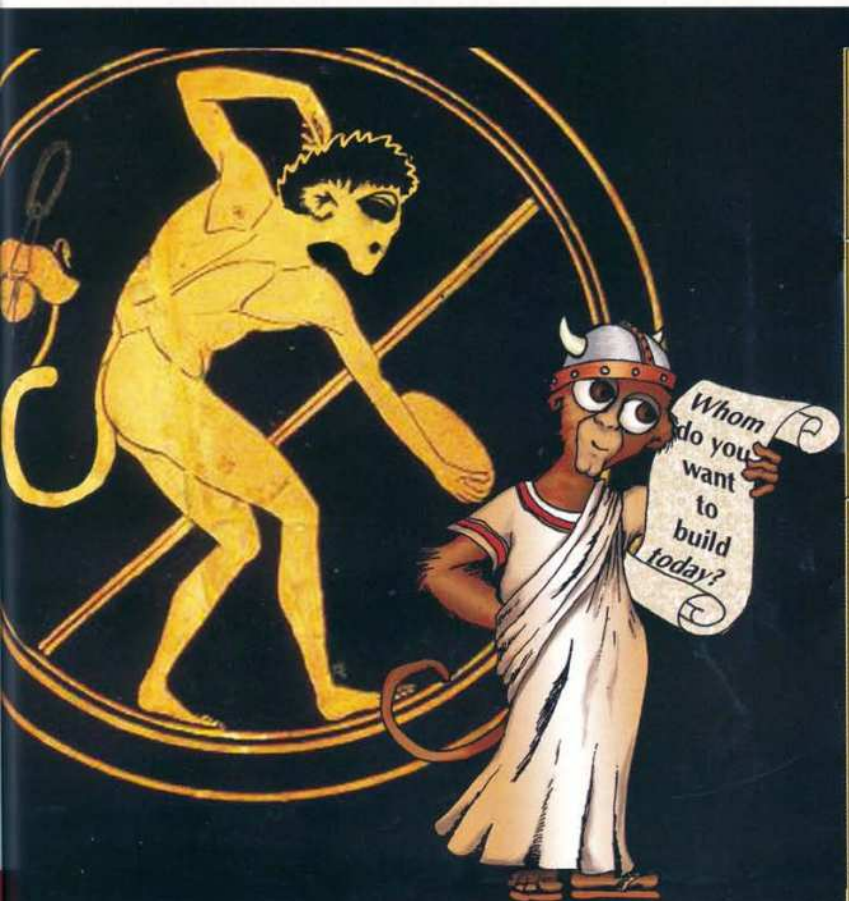
Vile Transformation (Su): By locking his jaws on a helpless or willing target for 8 continual hours, Chrylis can transform a humanoid creature into a kaorti. A non-humanoid subjected to this transformation instead becomes a kaorti thrall, gaining the fiendish creature template (or alternately the pseudonatural template if you have access to *Complete Arcane*). An unwilling victim can resist this transformation with a successful DC 11 Fortitude save, although each additional attempt by the kaorti increases this Fortitude save DC by +1.

Material Vulnerability (Ex): If he doesn't wear his resin suit, Chrylis must make a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and become fatigued while on the Material Plane. If he's rendered unconscious by this damage, the Material Plane deals lethal damage at the same rate with each failed Fortitude save.

Skills: Kaorti gain a +8 racial bonus on Heal checks.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 2nd): 1/day—*alter self, color spray* (DC 19), *feather fall, ray of enfeeblement* (+13 ranged touch), *reduce person* (DC 19), *spider climb*.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/8/8/8/6/4; caster level 12; arcane spell failure 15%): 0—*acid splash* (+12 ranged touch), *detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 19), *mage hand, message, mending, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue* (+7 melee touch); 1st—*charm person* (DC 19), *magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+12 ranged touch), *shield, Tenser's floating disc*; 2nd—*detect thoughts* (DC 20), *false life, mirror image, protection from arrows, web* (DC 20); 3rd—*fly, greater magic weapon, nondetection, stinking cloud* (DC 21); 4th—*dimension door,*



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KAORTI ITEMS

Kaorti items are often made from resins secreted by the creatures' palms. The resin is shaped while fresh and then alchemically treated to retain its flexibility as it dries. This resin helps to protect the kaorti from the pain of exposing its flesh to the natural world.

Ribbon Dagger: A ribbon dagger is a light exotic weapon crafted from kaorti resin. It consists of a resin handle to which is attached a long flexible strip of razor-sharp resin. A creature properly trained in the dagger's use can cause it to wrap around objects with ease like a strip of leather or to slash like a standard metal blade as he sees fit. When using a ribbon dagger, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep from being disarmed if the attack fails).

Ribbon Dagger (Light Exotic Melee Weapon): Cost 50 gp; Dmg (S) 1d3; Dmg (M) 1d4; Critical x4; Weight 1 lb.; Type Slashing.

Resin Suit: A kaorti resin suit consists of thin strips of alchemically treated resin wrapped fully around the body, similar to a mummy's wrappings. Many kaorti resin suits also feature complex ridges and designs on the legs and arms. Non-kaorti can wear resin suits, but for most creatures contact with the resin results in rashes or hives (these hives have no in-game effect). A kaorti in a resin suit is protected from the natural world and does not suffer the effects of its Material vulnerability.

Resin Suit (Light Armor): Cost 250 gp; Armor Bonus +4; Maximum Dex Bonus +3, Armor Check Penalty –4; Arcane Spell Failure 25%; Speed (30 ft) 30 ft.; Weight 20 lb.

NEW FEAT–RESINBOND

Your ability to manifest arcane magic interacts with items made of kaorti resin, causing the resin to become both more comfortable for you to wear and more difficult to remove. Weapons made of resin are more difficult to disarm, and armor made of resin acts almost like a second skin.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast arcane spells.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to keep from being disarmed of a kaorti resin weapon.

If you wear kaorti resin armor, the maximum Dexterity bonus of the armor increases by +2, the armor check penalty decreases by 2, and the arcane spell failure chance decreases by 10%.

dominate person (DC 22), *greater invisibility*; 5th—*contact other plane*, *pyring eyes*; 6th—*mass suggestion* (DC 24).

Possessions: *+1 keen ribbon dagger*, *+2 resin suit*, *boots of speed*, *ring of Charisma +4* (as a *cloak of Charisma +4*), *ring of protection +1*.

Tactics: Chrylis uses his *boots of speed* at the start of combat, casts *fly* and *greater invisibility* on himself, and then tries to maintain ranged superiority and targets the PCs with his spells. He favors *mass suggestion* and *dominate person* in combat. If brought below 15 hit points, he *dimension doors* away to safety. If Chrylis escapes, he'll continue to ambush and hound the PCs for as long as he is able, timing his attacks when they are already fighting other opponents if possible. Likewise, if the PCs never fall for Chrylis' initial attempt to contact them, the kaorti follows them south and attempts to finish them off before they can find Ilkharis.

Development: **Algorthas the Seer** (N male human expert 18) is currently dominated by Chrylis, and waits in the northern vestry. If the PCs defeat the kaorti, Algorthas won't speak to them until the *domination* effect is removed. He is not under orders to resist or fight the PCs, though, so he won't cause much trouble if they decide to return him home. If the *domination* is lifted, he gladly thanks the party and promises to answer any questions they have now or in the future for free. If asked about the frost giant Ilkharis, he asks for a few hours in his study, after which he presents the PCs with a tattered, two-year-old report from a paladin who encountered a frost giant by this name in the Jotens foothills directly south of Istivin. He recommends the PCs begin their search for the giant at the ruined border fort.

Searching the temple turns up no trace of Kireth Trantle or the other missing clerics of Pelor. Chrylis recently disposed of these troublesome clerics by transforming them to kaorti with his vile transformation ability and then sending them back to his home cyst in the Jotens to aid his fellow kaorti.

CHAPTER TWO: THE JOURNEY SOUTH

With the information gained from spells, research, or consultation with Algorthas, the party should have a good idea of where they can find Ilkharis. It's approximately 65 miles to the giant-held border fort, and travel times depend upon the party's mode of transport. The party likely doesn't have access to *greater teleport*, so they'll probably be forced to travel overland to reach the fort since none of them have ever seen their destination. Spells like *overland flight*, *shadow walk*, and *wind walk* can greatly increase the party's speed as they travel, yet a wise party doesn't rush this portion of the adventure. Chances are they don't know exactly which border fort is their goal, but as they head south, they'll be able to learn much if they stop to talk to locals, do some research, and look for clues.

Since the actual route the PCs take can vary greatly from game to game, this section simply presents information on the Istivin hinterlands in a gazetteer format. Use this information as inspiration to run the game. Finally, several sample encounters appear at the end of the chapter. These encounters are designed specifically for this adventure, and not only should they sufficiently challenge the PCs, they should provide them with additional information and hints on how to find Ilkharis.

Istivin's Hinterland

Sterich was flattened during the prior incursion of giants—only Istivin survived physically intact. Today, ruined buildings and towns are common sights on the trampled plains of southern Sterich. Only recently have the repatriated people begun rebuilding. The border forts along the Crystalmist Mountains and the Jotens are largely still in ruins or occupied by monsters and giants. All roads leading to them have fallen into neglect. However, nobles are repairing keeps and peasant-farmers are rebuilding their villages, slowly but surely reclaiming the lands. Monsters and other dangerous wildlife tend to avoid villages and major roads, and as long as the PCs stay within 10 miles of either, random encounters should generally be fairly minor. As the PCs stray further from civilization, encounters become more dangerous. In either case, there's an 8% chance per hour of travel of a random encounter occurring. If the PCs remain in one area (as in the case of camping overnight), roll once every four hours to determine if an encounter occurs. A result of "plains encounter" indicates you should instead roll on the sample temperate plains encounter table on page 92 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

ISTIVIN HINTERLAND ENCOUNTER TABLE

d%	Civilized Encounter	Average EL	Wilderness Encounter	Average EL
01–03	1 juvenile red dragon	10	1 young adult red dragon	13
04–08	1d6 hill giants	10	1d4 yrthaks	11
09–13	1d6 ogre barbarians	10	1d6 stone giants	11
14–20	1d3 dire tigers	9	1d6 hill giants	10
21–30	3d4 ogres	9	1d6 ogre barbarians	10
31–40	1d3 tigers	6	Adventuring party	Variable
41–50	Adventuring party	Variable	1d3 dire tigers	9
51–60	Travelers	Variable	3d4 ogres	9
61–80	Patrol of soldiers	Variable	1d3 tigers	6
81–100	Plains encounter	5	Plains encounter	5

Drudd Estate

Not far east of Istivin lies the sprawling estate and manor of **Pelman Drudd** (NE male human aristocrat 3/rogue 9), one of Sterich's more powerful merchant lords. Drudd escaped Sterich with of most his fortune intact when the giants invaded. Upon his return he used his substantial capital to initiate and monopolize trade, increasing his considerable fortune. He rebuilt his razed estates grander than before, and reestablished himself in Sterich's Council of Barons. Tired of his outsider status on the Council, Drudd recently petitioned the marchioness for a noble grant, but has not yet heard her response. His fiscal acumen has served Sterich well over the last several decades, and he is one of Marchioness Resbin's most trusted advisors.

DM's Notes: Drudd has a terrible secret—he's a cannibal. Not a few of the mysterious disappearances in Istivin have been the work of his most trusted retainers, and he keeps a larder of both living and dead victims deep beneath his manor. A veritable army of Wild Coast mercenaries protects his estate, though only a few know of or suspect his culinary secret.

Istivin Crossing

Now just a small village on the north bank of the Davish River, Istivin Crossing was actually the original capital city. After Istivin proper moved north to safer territory, only a few warehouses and a blockhouse were maintained at the banks of the ford. As Sterich was tamed, the village of Istivin Crossing grew here, thriving on trade between the mines of the Davish Headwaters and Istivin.

DM's Notes: The oldest settlement in modern Sterich, Istivin Crossing has a history as bloodstained as any town throughout Sterich. Nearly 200 years ago,

a group of twenty-seven miners from the headwaters went on strike against their heavy-handed foreman, an old orc-fighter named Brellis Krelont. To minimize the disruption in ore shipments, Krelont agreed to a meeting with the miners at Istivin Crossing. When the miners arrived, Krelont's thugs murdered them and buried the bodies in a mass grave. Krelont ordered a blockhouse built over the fresh gravesite, ostensibly to "guard against nonhuman incursion." Krelont reported that he sent the miners packing and the threat of strike had thus been quelled by his get-tough policy. He was later awarded with the Wardenship of the Marchlands by the king of Keoland for his efficiency in handling the strike and defending against raids. Krelont chose to relocate the trading post to Istivin shortly thereafter, allegedly for reasons of defense. In fact, he did so at the urgings of his men, many of whom were complaining of incessant whispers that pervaded the blockhouse every night. No one knows what terrible undead monster lurks underneath the abandoned blockhouse, but nearby villagers talk of missing travelers, and lock their doors up tight after dark.

Kragmere

Once a lavish farm manor, this abandoned estate is now a sprawling complex of buildings, barns, and sheds. Claimed by one **Holwin Kragmere** (NG female gnome adept 7), an alchemist and follower of a quasi-deity named Keoghtom, Kragmere has been transformed into an alchemy school. Holwin expanded the estate to house the students and provide storage, classrooms, and laboratories. Ten to twenty alchemists dwell at the Kragmere school at any one time. They spend much of their time in experimentation, attempting to unlock the secrets of nature and the universe through bubbling alembics and scientific formulae.

DM's Notes: This location is very friendly to adventurers, offering for sale all of the special substances listed on Table 7–8 in the *Player's Handbook* at 75% listed price. They might also offer for sale special alchemical substances from other sources, such as the *Arms and Equipment Guide*. Kragmere alchemists always need new supplies of chemicals, reagents, and other rare components, and frequently hire adventurers to acquire such materials.

The Oestral Abyss

The ancient House of Oester, distant relatives of Sterich's ruling Qualtaine family, was one of the first to be granted noble title by the earl. Alas, these auspicious beginnings did not end pleasantly for House Oester, and the name has since become synonymous with "ill-fortune" in Sterich. This is because where the respectable Oester hold once sat is now nothing but a dark gaping hole in the ground from which occasional clouds of gas emerge from lightless depths. The manor met its doom over 350 years ago. One night, the local serfs were awakened from their sleep by a monstrous rumbling. They emerged from their hovels to find the small keep gone and an open crater in its place. Tales hold the hole is bottomless and that none have plumbed its depths. It became known as the Oestral Abyss, and the Oesters gained their reputation of ill-luck. In fact, the gammers in Istivin can sometimes be heard to whisper that the present troubles of the unfortunate Querchard are because "there's a bit of the old Oester in his veins."

DM's Notes: The Oester misfortunes are just that—misfortunes. Balis Oester unknowingly constructed his keep over a massive limestone cavern. The combination of centuries of erosion below the keep and a minor earthquake caused a massive sinkhole that swallowed the greathouse. The sinkhole is far from bottomless—it's only 200 feet deep, and piled at its bottom are the ruins of the ancient keep. These ruins have been picked clean, because the sinkhole also serves as an entrance to the Underdark. More information about this site appears in the upcoming adventure "Wrath of the Abyss," in *DUNGEON* #119.

Chapel of Time

South of the Davish River and off the beaten path sits a crude chapel constructed of timber and stone. The first remarkable thing about this chapel is that while its architectural style shares many common themes with other ancient religious buildings, there are no icons or symbols of any kind to be found on its outer walls. But the strangeness doesn't end there. The chapel's appearance actually changes throughout the day. As the sun rises, the chapel seems brand new, its walls freshly constructed and free of erosion, its roof strong and solid, its iron doors polished and beautiful. As the day progresses, the chapel quickly falls into ruin, its walls crumbling, the doors rusting, windows clouding over with grime, the roof sagging, the grounds surrounding it becoming tangled and overgrown. As the sun sets every night, the chapel soundlessly yet dramatically crumbles to ruin. As night passes, the chapel's ruins slowly erode away into rubble, then dust, and by the darkest hour of night are gone completely. Yet as the sun rises, the chapel appears again, fresh and new as the day it was born. No one seems to know what causes the chapel's daily creation and destruction; its doors and windows cannot be opened, and seem impervious to magic. Nightly exploration of the ruins fails to yield any clues. Those who try to stand in the area occupied by the chapel in the pre-dawn, hoping to appear inside it when it manifests, either find they have somehow miscalculated their position as the chapel's walls appear beside them, or vanish as the chapel forms around them and are never seen again. The people of Sterich have numerous theories about the Chapel of Time, but generally they tend to avoid the strange building.

DM's Notes: The Chapel of Time is an ancient structure that predates the nation of Sterich. Once dedicated to an obscure god of time, the chapel's attendants turned against their normally benevolent deity and fell in with a doubtful lot of devil worshipers. As the corrupted clergy tore down their once-beloved altar and tried to erect a new altar to their infernal patron, the god of time smote them and desecrated their infernal chapel before moving on to seek more devout worshipers elsewhere.

Today, the Chapel of Time exists both inside and outside of time. In game terms, the chapel is surrounded by a *temporal stasis* effect (caster level 30). As long as this effect persists, nothing may enter the chapel, and it continues to repeat its accelerated erosion and reconstruction cycle. The *temporal stasis* effect can be removed with *dispel magic*, *freedom*, or something similar, but it returns with the

next sunrise and the cycle begins again. Once every 125 years, the *temporal stasis* effect vanishes on its own, aligning with a rare confluence of astronomical and celestial phenomena. For one day and one night, the devil-haunted undead clergy of the chapel are released from their prison, at which time they have the opportunity to undo the damage they've done and achieve both peace and absolution from their deity. So far, the clergy have not been able to accomplish this goal, but the outflow of devils and strange undead whenever the chapel opens is enough to summon adventurers from near and far. Perhaps one day, someone can aid the clergy of the Chapel of Time and save them from their eternal punishment.

Encounters in Sterich

Use the following encounters to both liven up the journey south and to provide the PCs with hints and clues on how to find the frost giant cleric Ilkharis.

Event 1: Little Sister (EL 14)

After the PCs head south toward the border forts, they note that the road grows less and less used. Soon, as it enters the Jotens foothills, it becomes little more than a trail. At some point, perhaps near sundown, run this encounter.

Creatures: A frost giantess barbarian with a grudge is currently scouting the area. Her name is Sufrira, and as fate would have it, she's a member of the band at the border fort recently ruled by Ilkharis. Under orders to scout out the lands between the fort and the human road for potential attacks, she bears a strong hatred toward humankind and their ilk because her older brother, Big Johann, was slain by a band of adventurers (Frush O' Suggill and company) eighteen years ago at the eastern Sterich village now known as Johann's End. She was too young to join in the giant invasion, but did her part against the Sterish warriors during the recent uprising. Sufrira travels with her three trained gorgon pets.

Sufrira has chafed at the bit ever since Ilkharis ordered the withdrawal from Istivin, and fights maniacally in any battle in which she can slay humans. Her short temper and penchant for breaking others' arms and legs is the main reason she was sent north to scout the area for humans.

Sufrira, female frost giant barbarian 4: CR 13; Large giant (cold); HD 14d8+98 plus 4d12+28; hp 215; Init +6; Spd 50 ft.; AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +14; Grp +28; Atk +20 melee (3d6+24/19–20/×3, *+1 greataxe* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +15 ranged (2d6+10, rock); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (3d6+24/19–20/×3, *+1 greataxe* with

4 points in Power Attack) or +15 ranged (2d6+10, rock); SA rage 2/day, rock throwing; SQ immunity to cold, low-light vision, rock catching, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge, vulnerability to fire; AL CE; SV Fort +20, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 31, Dex 14, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +20, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +8, Jump +28, Spot +8, Survival +9.

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Track.

Languages: Giant.

Rage: hp 251; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Grp +30; Atk +22 melee (3d6+27/19–20/×3, *+1 greataxe* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +15 ranged (2d6+12, rock); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (3d6+27/19–20/×3, *+1 greataxe* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +15 ranged (2d6+12, rock); SV Fort +22, Will +8; Str 35, Con 28; Climb +22, Jump +30.

Possessions: *+3 studded leather armor, +1 greataxe*, giant's bag holding 5 throwing rocks, a haunch of unidentifiable green meat, a 1-lb. bag of salt, a string of freshwater pearls worth 800 gp, and a large amulet fashioned of meteoritic iron inscribed with an infinity symbol and a downward-pointing arrow (Knowledge [the planes] DC 15 to recognize as a symbol for the Abyss) worth 550 gp. This was Ilkharis's unholy symbol before he was usurped; Sufrira took it from him as a trophy but isn't particularly religious herself.

Gorgons (3): hp 91, 78, 68; *Monster Manual* 137.

Tactics: Sufrira is hunkered down behind an old landslide as the PCs approach, about 200 feet away once the PCs step into visibility. A successful DC 2 Listen check or a DC –2 Spot check allows the characters to notice her before she starts hurling boulders; remember to modify the PCs' Spot and Listen checks by –20 for the 200-foot distance between them and the giant. Sufrira opens the battle by lobbing boulders at any targets she sees; her initial throws suffer a –2 penalty for range. The gorgons remain in total cover behind the landslide until the PCs come within 30 feet, at which point Sufrira sends them out to breathe on the PCs. Sufrira fights to the death.

Development: Sufrira's camp is hidden on the far side of the landslide. Nothing of value is hidden here, but it's possible to track her all the way back to the border fort. It's been a week since she was assigned to scout duty, and the ground between here and the fort is rocky and barren, so it takes a successful DC 25 Survival check to follow the trail.

Event 2: Mad Amos (EL 12)

This event occurs after the encounter with Sufrira, as the characters draw near the Jotens. As the path takes them further toward the forbidding mountains; have the PCs make DC 0 Listen checks (modified by –6 for distance). Success indicates they hear the sound of bells jingling and raised voices over a hill ahead.

Creatures: The noise comes from a group of mounted men gathered around a single, rough-looking, fur clad man in a small, bowl-shaped valley between several barren hills. The leader of the mounted group is a haughty-looking fellow with an aquiline nose, and he is busy accusing the man of trespassing on the lands of the March of Sterich and informing the wild-eyed man that the penalty is death. The man at the center of the group looks on grimly, clutching a sword in one hand and a hatchet in the other. A large and angry golden eagle perches on a crude tent frame near this man.

The leader of the mounted men is "Baron" Teusele, one of Sterich's many self-appointed noblemen of low character. He has no noble patent from the march and is in fact little more than a thug and extortionist. Teusele believes if he can secure a patch of abandoned land for himself and create a position of strength, then the marchioness will have no choice but to recognize his title.

The man on the ground is an old prospector known as Mad Amos, a longtime resident of these parts. Teusele and his band stumbled upon Mad Amos and found his sack of gold nuggets. Teusele quickly realized that Amos had found a nice vein of gold somewhere nearby, and is currently trying to intimidate him into revealing its location. The crusty old prospector has no intention of revealing the information, and if the party doesn't intervene within a minute or two, Teusele orders his men to attack. If the party interrupts, Teusele sees them as competitors for the claim, allies of Mad Amos, or both. Unless the PCs imme-

diately try to adjust his attitude from hostile to something less enraged, he orders his men to attack both them and Amos.

Baron Teusele, male human fighter 9: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d10; hp 54; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +9; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d8+5/19–20, *+2 longsword*); Full Atk +14 melee (1d8+5/19–20, *+2 longsword*); SA —; SQ —; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7 Will +2; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +3, Handle Animal +13, Intimidate +15, Ride +16.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, *+1 light steel shield*, *+2 longsword*, *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, bag of gold nuggets worth a total of 400 gp (taken from Amos).

Baron's Henchmen, male human warrior 6 (6): CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 6d8+18; hp 45 each; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d8+1/×3, masterwork battleaxe) or +6 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+1/×3, masterwork battleaxe) or +6 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); SA —; SQ —; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10. Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +9, Ride +11.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow), Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: *+1 chainmail*, heavy wooden shield, masterwork battleaxe, heavy crossbow, 20 crossbow bolts.

Light warhorses (7): hp 22 each; *Monster Manual* 274.

Mad Amos, male human ranger 4/fighter 5: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+8 plus 5d10+10; hp 63; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d8+5/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +13 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+5/19–20, *+1 longsword*) and +11 melee (1d6+2/×3, *+1 handaxe*) or +13/+8 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); SA favored enemy +2 (giant), spells, two-weapon combat style; SQ animal companion, wild empathy +6; AL CG; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +12, Handle Animal +7, Heal +8, Knowledge (geography) +6, Profession (prospector) +13, Ride +6, Survival +8.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Endurance[B], Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot[B], Quick Draw, Track[B], Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (longsword)[B], Weapon Specialization (longsword)[B].

Languages: Common, Giant.

Ranger Spell Prepared (caster level 2): 1st—*longstrider*.

Possessions: *+2 leather armor*, *+1 longsword*, *+1 handaxe*, longbow, 20 arrows, *gloves of Dexterity +2*.

Kiliran, eagle animal companion: hp 5; *Monster Manual* 272.

Tactics: If Teusele's men attack the PCs, they charge on horseback. Teusele uses his Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, and Trample feats to full effect, while four of his thugs charge and then switch weapons to attack from horseback with their battleaxes. While these men charge, two hang back and attempt to kill Mad Amos, dismounting if necessary. Mad Amos fights anyone who comes near him, PCs included if they seem threatening.

Development: If the PCs drive off Teusele or otherwise defuse the situation, Mad Amos is grateful but still a little suspicious. He remains indifferent toward the PCs until they use Diplomacy or Intimidate. If the PCs return his bag of gold nuggets, they gain a +4 bonus on their Diplomacy check. If his attitude is adjusted to friendly or better, Amos agrees to talk to the PCs.

Amos is a former captain of the guard from a distant nation. He retired to the Jotens two decades ago to do some pros-

pecting, and knows a fair amount about the region. He can confirm that the frost giant Ilkharis rules a band of giants in a nearby border fort. He can give exact directions to the border fort they are looking for. He does add that there seems to have been some trouble amongst the giants at the fort lately, though he doesn't know exactly what. Finally, he adds in a whisper that the giants have had some strange visitors of late. He doesn't know who and can't elaborate beyond admitting he's seen some odd tracks now and again. He daren't say more, on account of his belief that the "hills have eyes." If pressured, he'll admit these prints look like elf footprints, but they're somehow a little bit... off (these footprints belong to the drow).

Teusele and his men have little interest in helping the PCs. If the PCs don't interfere while they deal with Mad Amos their attitude is unfriendly, but if they're made helpful Teusele can confirm the rumor that several giants led by a frost giant cleric dwell in the ruined border fort to the south.

Event 3: A Friendly Warning

As the PCs come within a few miles of the border fort, they come across a pile of rough stones that forms a tall cairn or monument. Mingled with the stones are three massive severed heads with light blue skin and dirty blond hair and beards. Various feathers and stick totems have been tied into their hair and placed on the mound around them.

A Knowledge (local) check (DC 20) recognizes this as a ritualistic warning marker used by savage or barbarous cultures. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 25) also notices hints that the deity Erythnul seems to be associated with the fetishes and warnings. A character with the Track feat who makes a Survival check (DC 15) can identify three sets of giant tracks coming from the south that end here on trampled ground that appears to be the site of a recent battle. Further, a set of dragon prints can be found mingled with the giant prints; a successful DC 31 Knowledge (arcana) check correctly identifies the prints as those of a Huge blue dragon.

This is all that remains of the last three frost giants who tried to desert the border fort. Velikar and the blue dragon Asiroxus chased them down and killed them, constructing this monument as a warning to the other frost giants in the fort. On a clear day, this cairn is just visible from the towers of the fort, reminding the wall guards of the folly of insubordination.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BORDER FORT

In Sterich's early days, the border forts served as the primary barrier against attacks by giants and savage humanoids from the mountains. Over the years they became less necessary and held only token garrisons. When the giant invasion

came, the forts were caught unprepared and their defenders were slaughtered.

After slaying King Galmoor and leaving Istivin, the frost giant cleric Ilkharis and his band of loyal followers took up residence in one such fort. Recently, Ilkharis's most capable apprentice, a hill giant cleric of Erythnul called Velikar, overthrew the aging frost giant and took control of the fort. Ilkharis was imprisoned deep in the bowels of the fortress. Velikar commanded the remaining frost giants in the fort to man the outer defenses, ordering them to remain there until further notice. Many of the frost giants protested, and a few were made examples of. Now, the disgruntled frost giants follow Velikar's commands only because of the threat posed by Velikar's blue dragon ally.

The fort lies at the base of the Jotens in an area of scrub brush and large boulders. It consists of a buttressed curtain wall abutting a sheer cliff face over 500 feet high. The wall was constructed with a slight overhang to provide cover from above. Originally a few outbuildings and a block keep were built adjacent to the rock wall of the cliff, however these buildings were burned and largely ruined during the giant attack. Opening from the ruined keep into the cliff face are a series of chambers excavated to serve as the fort's last line of defense. Walls within the keep and chambers are constructed of masonry. The ceilings of the chambers are 15 feet high unless otherwise noted. None of the doors remain intact, having long since succumbed to scavengers or the elements. Unless mentioned in the descriptions, there are no light sources within the rooms.

1. Gate Towers and Curtain Walls (EL 13)

The curtain walls of an ancient fort rise at the base of a tall cliff along the northern edge of the Jotens. Two gate towers frame the fort's entrance, though the gates themselves are long gone. The fort's general appearance is one of abandonment and neglect. The walls are still intact but are starting to succumb to the combination of old damage and years of weathering. A three-hundred-foot recently cleared area before the walls is the only hint that anyone actually inhabits this place.

The gate towers are each 40 feet in diameter and rise 60 feet above the ground. Each is topped by flat roofs surrounded by a 5-foot crenellated battlement that provides cover for Medium creatures. There are 20 throwing rocks stacked atop each tower. The walls of the towers are reinforced masonry. The interior floors of the towers have collapsed, leaving only a spiral staircase running up the interior wall connecting the ground to the curtain wall tops and the tower roofs.

The curtain walls are 30 feet high with an average thickness of 10 feet. They have exterior buttressing and are composed of layers of masonry sandwiching a 6-foot-thick core of packed earth. The tops of the walls have a 7-foot-wide parapet and are protected by an exterior battlement with 5-foot merlons (same cover as the towers).

Creatures: Four frost giants dwell in the two gate towers. Two are on duty at all times, one atop one of the towers and the other patrolling one of the curtain walls. The other giants are sleeping or performing mundane chores in the base of the other tower. Each giant carries 1d4+1 throwing rocks in his bag.

Frost Giants (4): hp 153, 140, 133, 110; *Monster Manual* 122.

Tactics: If the giants notice a PC enter the cleared area before the fort, they shout an alarm and attack with hurled rocks. If the alarm is raised, the giants in the tower rouse themselves and prepare for attack. One rushes to the top of the second tower, and the other takes up position inside the gate to fend off invaders. These giants reach their positions in 3 rounds. Likewise, the alarm alerts the hill giants within the keep as described in area **2** and rouses all of the dire tigers.

Treasure: Amidst the rubbish of the filthy frost giant camp at the base of the two towers is their combined treasure. This consists of 1,300 gp, 1,400 sp, a platinum music box engraved with images of Moradin and other members of the dwarven pantheon worth 1,500 gp (stolen from the rectory of the dwarven temple in Istivin long ago and worth double that if returned to the priests), an alexandrite worth 500 gp, and a *wand of magic missiles* (caster level 7) with 26 charges that has been used as a toothpick.

2. Bailey (EL 11)

This open area of hard-packed earth is strewn with debris from the ruined fort. Crumbling arrowslits gape vacantly out of the cliff face above the keep. A fifty-foot-high stone turret that protrudes from the cliff face has partially collapsed inward on the second floor, creating a dark, gaping hole in the wall. The remains of bonfires scar the grounds in a few places.

Creatures: A pack of three dire tigers (the giants' pets) inhabits this area and area **3**. At any given time 1d3–1 are asleep in area **3**. The rest are on the prowl here. Sleeping tigers awake and join the fray in a few rounds if an attack occurs.

Dire Tigers (3): hp 120 each; *Monster Manual* 65.

Tactics: If the alarm has been sounded all of the tigers are awake and ready. If alerted, giants at the arrow slits of areas **10**, **14**, and **15** are ready to fire on any intruders. Velikar casts *blessed aim* on the crossbowmen in area **10**, giving them a +2 morale bonus on all ranged attacks as long as he concentrates. If these giants lose sight of the PCs, they cease firing and wait for the party to come up the staircase from area **6**.

3. Ruined Stables

This building's roof has collapsed, as have large sections of the walls. It seems to have once been a stable, but now appears to serve as an animal den of some sort.

Any dire tigers not encountered in area **2** are encountered here.

Treasure: Scattered within the filth and carrion of this animal den can be found the following treasures, all dropped from victims' corpses: a masterwork halberd, a rotted quiver holding 7 *+1 icy burst arrows*, and a *ring of feather falling*.

4. Burned Smithy

This building was consumed in the same conflagration that destroyed the keep.

It is recognizable only by the forge and anvil that remain in the center of this charred ruin.

There is nothing of interest here, although sneaky PCs might be able to use the ruins as cover to aid an infiltration of the fort.

5. Burned Keep (EL 10)

This stone shell was once the fort's keep, but it appears to have been consumed by a fire in the distant past. The roof is gone entirely, and only the exterior walls and some partial interior walls remain, climbing to no more than ten feet in height. The building's floor is choked with charred debris save for a path leading from what was once the keep's main entrance to an open fifteen-foot archway in the cliff face.

Trap: The giants have rigged a trap in this room, just beyond the northern archway. At the point marked "T" on the map a thin tripwire connects to the adjacent wall to the east which has been weakened by the fire and years of weathering. If the PCs pass through this area, the 20-foot length of the east wall collapses onto anyone standing in the area of effect.

Collapsing Wall Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 23 Reflex Save half; no attack roll required (18d6, crush); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 25).

Development: If the collapsing wall trap is triggered, the giants in area **6** rush in here to finish off anyone who may have survived.

6. Anteroom (EL 10)

The ceiling in this room vaults to twenty feet overhead. Two pillars rise from the center of the room to support the ceiling, and garbage and debris are scattered around the room. The smell of carrion permeates the air. Several poorly cured wolf and bear hides hang from the pillars on large nails driven into the stone. Above them iron brackets hold smoldering torches, one per pillar.

This area serves as the entrance to the chambers tunneled into the cliff face. Velikar moved his loyal hill giant followers into the chambers beyond, where they watch the frost giant members of the band as much as look out for intruders.

Creatures: Two hill giants normally stand guard in this room. If alerted to an attack, they bring the gray render from area **13** to this chamber to aid in defending it.

Hill Giants (2): hp 102 each; *Monster Manual* 123.

Gray Render: hp 140; *Monster Manual* 138.

7. Empty Chambers

These rooms are all dark and abandoned. The giants have no need of them, so the chambers sit empty save for debris left over from the fort's original occupants or garbage from the new occupants.

8. Giant Barracks

This chamber is strewn with junk, spare equipment, half-eaten food, and other odds and ends. Eight piles of bedding lie on the floor. A crack in the floor of the northwest corner seems to have been nominated as a privy, if the evil smell arising from it is any indication.

Creatures: The hill giants stationed in areas **6** and **14** live in this room; if the alarm has not been raised, they can be encountered here sleeping, eating, and doing whatever it is giants do when they're not killing adventurers.

Treasure: The hill giants keep their treasure tucked inside their filthy bedding. Within the room are 2,200 sp, with an additional 650 gp mixed in, a grease-stained arcane scroll of *finger of death* apparently used once as a napkin, a shrunken orc's head stuffed with 55 moss agates worth 10 gp each, and an *amulet of natural armor +1* crammed into a dire rat skull.

9. Larder (EL 10)

The giants use this room as a larder, and the strong smell of putrescence seeping from within indicates that they aren't picky about what they eat. Stacked within are several barrels of rancid beer, a crate of rock-hard low-grade sausages looted from a caravan, a fly-covered and half-eaten elk carcass, the decomposing carcass of a monstrously huge dire boar, the corpses of six orcs, two humans, a dozen stirges (bite-size snacks), and a skinned manticore.

Creature: What appears to be the carcass of a dire boar is in fact a fiendish creature of great size and menace whose foul heritage gives its hide the appearance of decay and putrefaction. It is Velikar's pet, a gift from his deity. The fiendish dire boar wandered in here to feed on one of the orcs and decided to take a little nap once it got full. If the party enters the room the boar awakens in a bad mood and attacks.

Fiendish Advanced Dire Boar: CR 10; Large magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 16d8+112; hp 184; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +12; Grp +26; Atk or Full Atk +22 melee (2d6+15/19–20, gore); SA ferocity, smite good (1/day, +16 damage); SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire 10, scent, spell resistance 21; SR 15; AL NE; SV Fort +17, Ref +11, Will +14; Str 30, Dex 13, Con 24, Int 3, Wis 15, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +13, Spot +14.

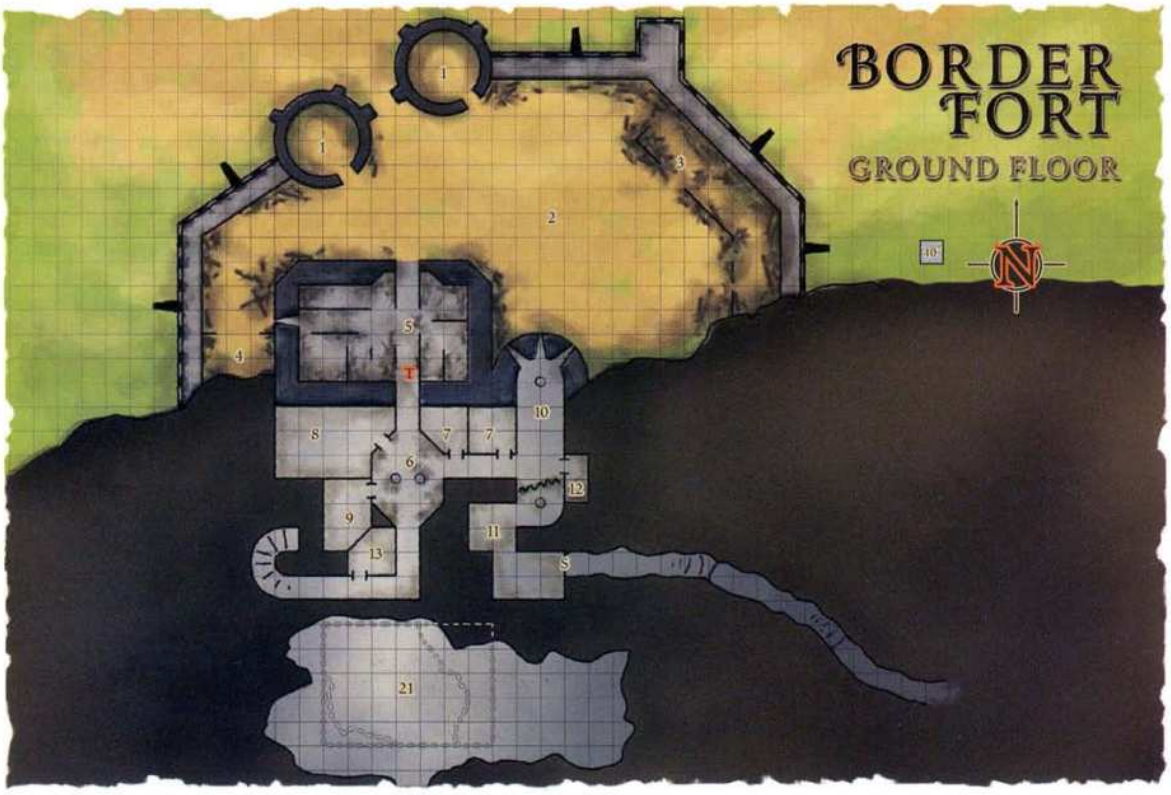
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Improved Critical (gore), Improved Natural Attack (gore), Iron Will, Weapon Focus (gore).

Languages: Abyssal.

10. Abandoned Hall (EL 12)

Only the faintest breath of fresh air filters in through the arrow slits at the north end of this hall. Bisecting the room to the south is a floor-to-ceiling curtain of dark green, hair-like moss dangling down from a natural fissure in the ceiling. Whether it is from this growth or from some other undiscovered source, the foul smell of decay fills the chamber.

The smell of decay actually emanates from area **12** to the east. A Survival check (DC 20) reveals in the dust of the floor many giant footprints and the hoof prints of a large boar



traveling between the moss curtain and the eastern archway.

Creature: The curtain of moss may look sinister, but is in fact little more than an unusual plant formation. The true menace within this chamber is the roper that lurks just to the south of the curtain. When the giants arrived several years ago, they found the roper living here already. The roper, being a canny beast, managed to convince the giants to allow it to remain here; in return for guarding this room, the giants would leave it alone. Over time, Skurver (see area **11**) befriended the roper, and he often brings it food in the form of prisoners or wild animals in return for its continued friendship.

The roper uses the moss curtain as concealment to hide; when any non-giants enter the room, it immediately attacks them with its strands.

Roper: hp 88; *Monster Manual* 215.

Development: If the roper falls below 30 hit points, it calls on Skurver (area **11**) for aid.

11. Postern (EL 11)

This dark, dank series of chambers is strewn with filth and smells strongly like an animal's den.

These disorderly rooms once served as the fort's secret postern entrance and a guard room. Now they house a single forlorn but deadly occupant. The secret door in the east wall can be found with a successful DC 20 Search check. Beyond the door, one of the mountain's natural fissures has been widened and fitted with steps. It rises gradually until it finally emerges from a concealed entrance on the mountainside high above. From the outside the door can be located with a Search check (DC 20) if the party is in the right area. A Survival check (DC 25) on the rocky terrain outside can locate the large boar tracks outside and follow them to the door, reducing the Search check DC to 10.

Creature: The lone occupant of these rooms is Skurver, an outcast hill giant that has become afflicted with lycanthropy by a dire wereboar. Although Skurver slew the creature, he was badly wounded in the battle. Skurver wrestled against his new condition for many months, but he has now finally succumbed completely to lycanthropy. He's managed to maintain his role in the fort as the chief hunter without revealing his condition to anyone save his only friend, the roper in area **10**. Since the roper can't contract the disease from Skurver, it has nothing to fear from him. Today, Skurver lives in constant fear that Velikar could discover his condition and order him slain for the good of the giant community.

Skurver, hill giant dire wereboar: hp 185; *Monster Manual* 177.

Tactics: Skurver usually fights in his hill giant form, but if brought below 100 hit points he changes into hybrid form to finish the fight.

12. Abandoned Armory

This cluttered room was once used as an armory for the border fort, but now

all that remains are several weapon and armor racks and some rusted swords and broken bows.

13. Guard Room (EL 8)

This bare chamber holds only shreds of crushed wood and large mounds of offal.

Creature: This room serves as quarters for a gray render that has bonded to the hill giants and serves as a mascot of sorts for their tribe. It guards the stairs if the giants in area **6** have not already retrieved it to repel attackers. The giants do not allow it to keep any treasure. The wood splinters are from logs that the render enjoys chewing.

Gray Render: hp 140; *Monster Manual* 138.

14. Western Watch Room (EL 13)

Four arrow slits in the north wall allow some light into this large room. Two pillars support the ceiling overhead. A massive rack on the west wall holds ten giant-sized heavy crossbows. An open locker beneath holds dozens of giant bolts. Next to the rack is a barrel.

The arrow slits overlook the bailey 25 feet below and are 4 feet high by 9 inches wide—too small for the giants to hurl boulders through. Instead, they use large crossbows. There are 240 Large crossbow bolts in the locker. The barrel holds pitch. When the inhabitants of this room need light, they dip a stick into the pitch to create a torch. Torch stubs are discarded through the arrow slits along with other wastes.

Creatures: Velikar's elite giant soldiers are stationed in this chamber. Better disciplined and better equipped than most hill giants, they played a crucial role in Velikar's capture of Ilkharis.

Hill giant fighter 1 (6): CR 8; Large giant; HD 12d8+60 plus 1d10+5; hp 125 each; Init –1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 8, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +10; Grp +21; Atk +15 melee (3d6+19/×3, *+1 greataxe* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +9 ranged (2d6+7, rock) or +9 ranged (2d8/17–20, large heavy crossbow); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (3d6+19/×3, *+1 greataxe* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +9 ranged (2d6+7, rock) or +9 ranged (2d8/17–20, large heavy crossbow); SA rock throwing; SQ low-light vision, rock catching; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Jump +8, Listen +3, Spot +6.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (heavy crossbow), Power Attack, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow), Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +1 greataxe,* masterwork heavy crossbow.

Tactics: If the alarm is raised, these hill giants split up between areas **14** and **15** to fire out the arrow slits. If the party attacks during darkness, the giants dip bolts in the barrel of pitch and light them before firing them into the bailey below. These missiles give off light as a torch for 5 minutes. Velikar remains in area **14** concentrating on his *blessed aim* spell (which grants the giants a +2 morale bonus on ranged attack rolls as long as Velikar concentrates) until the PCs are under cover or enter the tunnels. At that point he returns to area **18** and sends the hill giants to area **10** to await the intruders. If it appears intruders are trying to enter through area **17**, he sends the giants there before retreating to area **18**.

Treasure: Hidden at the bottom of the barrel of crossbow bolts is a stash the elite hill giants have hidden without the knowledge of their brethren. This stash contains 1,050 sp, 700 gp, 20 pp, and a dwarf skull dipped in gold and inscribed with the giant rune for "runt." The skull is worth 150 gp (it's a macabre trophy at best and not very dwarf-friendly).

15. Eastern Watch Room

This room is similar to area **14** but lacks the weapons rack. The giants use this position to fire crossbows into the bailey.

16. Abandoned War Room

To all appearances this room may resemble area **7**. However, this was once the war room of the fort's commander. Hidden in the southwest corner is a secret panel in the wall (Search DC 22 to locate) that contains several leather scroll tubes. These tubes contain two scrolls. The first is a set of floor plans for this fort (although they don't show the cavern below area **21** or the tunnel between areas **21** and **17**). The other scroll tubes hold the floor plans to other border forts along Sterich's southern and western borders, including their known weaknesses and secret entrances. These were kept in case any of the forts ever fell and were supposed to be destroyed if the fort was about to be overrun. Unfortunately all of the officers who knew of the cache's existence were killed early in the siege of the fort.

17. Great Hall

This chamber's arched ceiling climbs to a height of thirty feet. Groined vaults support the vast ceiling. The wall to the north has been broken apart, creating a huge hole that opens outside. An archway exits the chamber to the southeast, and a wide, rough corridor to the southwest has clearly been burrowed through solid rock.

Area **2** is 25 feet below the floor of this chamber. A Survival check (DC 15) locates great clawed tracks (the dragon's) going between the opening and the burrowed tunnel. Giant-sized shod tracks traverse the room between the western arch and the southeastern. A Survival check (DC 25) notices medium-sized tracks of shod feet mingled with those of the giants' (these are drow tracks). The room is otherwise empty.

18. Velikar's Chamber (EL 15)

Badly stained wall frescoes are all that remain here of what was once the fort's chapel. Now it is redolent with the stench of decay mixed with the spicy tang of incense. The oppressive miasma is poorly ventilated by a draft between the room's two archways. The ceiling vaults to high overhead and is lost in the haze. The source of the stench appears to be a smoldering brazier against the east wall composed of a bronze bowl atop a 5-foot stack of humanoid skulls. The skulls near the top of this stack are more recent,

with rotten scraps of flesh still clinging to them. Within the bronze bowl itself can be seen charred stumps of severed humanoid and animal limbs. Suspended from the wall above the brazier is a hideous clay mask of huge proportions. A crude altar cobbled together from blackened stones scrounged from the burned out ruins in the courtyard below sits in the center of the room. A jagged iron knife rests on the altar in a pool of dried blood. A pile of tapestries against the north wall serves as bedding.

Creature: This chamber is the abode of Velikar, a hill giant cleric of Erythnul. He joined Ilkharis's giant band hoping to use it to further his deity's bloody agenda of slaughter. He soon chafed under Ilkharis's patient campaign but the frost giant was too powerful for him to usurp, and so he was forced to wait. When Ilkharis was stricken with illness, Velikar seized the opportunity to wrest control of the band using the support of his hill giant followers. Now he seeks to unite the disparate giant tribes and initiate a new era of slaughter upon the lowland humans in a bloody tribute to his god Erythnul.

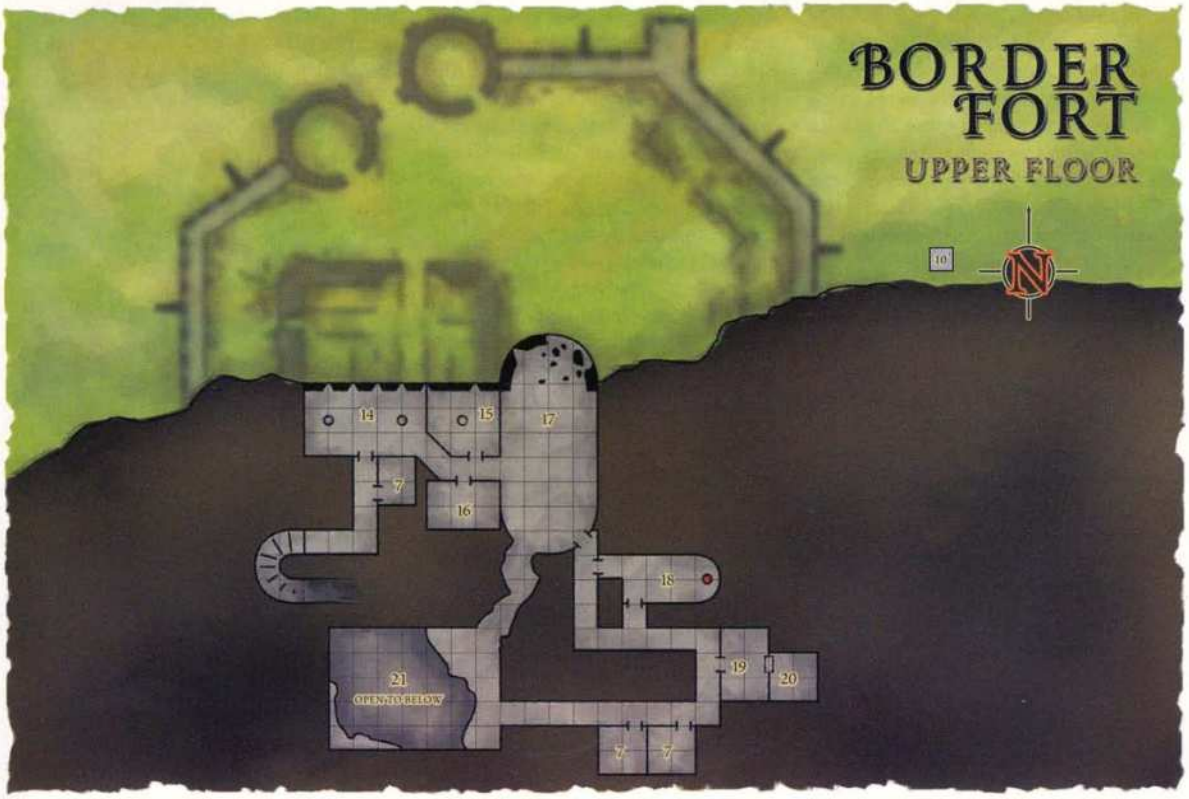
Velikar conducts foul rituals of bloodletting to Erythnul upon his altar in this room. He then consumes the torsos of his victims, adds their heads to his brazier stand, and burns the limbs along with his incense. Most of the captives taken in the giants' raids meet this fate—even those for whom ransoms have been paid. The bedding, altar, knife, and brazier are gruesome but otherwise ordinary.

Velikar is a brute of a hill giant, standing fully 12 feet tall. His face is distorted with hideous tattoos sacred to Erythnul, and his garments are smeared and caked with gore. He grew up in the steading of the hill giant chief Nosnra, deep in the Jotens. His father was a hideous, malformed giant known as "The Keeper," who served as turnkey in the chief's dungeons. The Keeper was killed by human adventur-

CAMPAIGN SEED: AGAINST THE GIANTS

The giants and their savage humanoid allies still hold eight other border forts in various stages of ruin. After King Galmoor's death and the withdrawl from Istivin, the centralized authority over these forts fell apart and they existed in a semi-autonomous state loosely confederated with Ilkharis's band. Velikar seeks to bring them all once again under a single powerful leader to launch a new wave of slaughter on the Sterish.

The information contained in the floorplans hidden in area **16** is extremely valuable to the March of Sterich. Characters with the plans in their possession have a great advantage if they choose to assault the other forts. These forts are occupied by several races of giants, as well as ogres, trolls, bugbears, orcs, and various beasts such as manticores and dire wolves. Perhaps a great leader is emerging or returning to power among them, someone who could rival the Great Ones like Chief Nosnra, Jarl Grugnir, or Snurre Iron-belly. A party that undertook this sort of quest would surely reap great rewards from the spoils taken by the giants as well as gain the gratitude of the marchioness and the Sterish military.



ers eighteen years ago, and his legendary (among hill giants) greataxe was stolen. Velikar was away at the time, but upon returning swore to slaughter all humankind in his quest to recover his father's axe. The axe currently rests in The Old Livery in Istivin (see "Istivin: City of Shadows" in *DUNGEON* #117).

Velikar, male hill giant cleric 12: CR 13; Large giant; HD 24d8+96; hp 204; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +18; Grp +33; Atk +27 melee (2d6+20/19–20/×2, *+3 unholy morningstar* with 6 points in Power Attack) or +18 ranged (2d6+11, rock); Full Atk +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+20/19–20/×2, *+3 unholy morningstar* with 6 points in Power Attack) or +18 ranged (2d6+11, rock); SA rock throwing, spells, rebuke undead; SQ low-light vision, rock catching; AL CE; SV Fort +20, Ref +9, Will +16; Str 33, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 19.

Skills: Climb +24, Concentration +16, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +19, Spot +19.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (morningstar), Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 12): 0—*guidance, cure minor wounds* (2), *mending, resistance, virtue*; 1st—*bane* (DC 15), *command* (DC 15), *cure light wounds, deathwatch, doom* (DC 15), *entropic shield, protection from good*[D]; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, death knell* (DC 16), *desecrate*[D], extended *divine favor, silence* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16); 3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *blessed aim**, *cure serious wounds* (2), *invisibility purge, magic circle against good*[D]; 4th—*chaos hammer*[D] (DC 18), *cure critical wounds* (2), *divine power, spell immunity*; 5th—*dispel law*[D], *flame strike* (DC 19), extended *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *plane shift* (DC 19); 6th—*animate objects*[D], *blade barrier* (DC 20), *heal*.

*This spell is detailed on page 154 of *Complete Divine*.

D: Domain spell. Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: Rhino hide armor, +1 unholy morningstar, periapt of wisdom +2, bag of 4 throwing rocks, a pair of giant-size boots, a chunk of moldy cheese, a key to the door in area **20**, a solid gold tiger statuette worth 800 gp, and 674 gp.

Tactics: If Velikar is alerted to the party's approach, he casts *blessed aim* as mentioned in areas **2** and **14**. If the PCs penetrate the fort's tunnels he prepares himself with his extended *divine favor, protection from good, entropic shield*, and *spell immunity (lightning bolt, ray of enfeeblement*, and *magic missile*). He then waits in this chamber and listens for the party to approach. He tries to quietly circle around and attack the party from the rear, hoping to get a shot on a weaker character who might hang back in a party. He follows up with *blade barrier* down the center of the party to split their resources, followed by *flame strike* and *chaos hammer*. Eventually, he switches to melee with his *+1 unholy morningstar*, upon which he casts an extended *greater magic weapon* spell daily. He may pause long enough to use *deathwatch* or *death knell* in order to finish off wounded foes. If hard-pressed, he retreats to area **21** to rally with the dragon. If cut off from escape, he uses Improved Bull Rush and the special qualities of his *rhino hide armor* to good advantage. He thinks nothing of dying in direct combat to further glorify his deity of slaughter.

Treasure: In addition to his gear, Velikar keeps a large, flat case in his bag. This case contains several sheets of parchment (most made from humanoid sources) that Velikar has been using to record his observations on Sterich's defenses. Included in these papers are sets of possible attack plans, written in Giant, which detail plans for a horrifying alliance between the numerous giant tribes still scattered throughout the Jotens and the Crystalmist Mountains. The last few pages indicate that Velikar has recently made some significant steps toward this grand alliance by securing the aid of a large band of drow that dwell deep below the city of Istivin. All that the drow asked of Velikar is for the custody of his prisoner Ilkahris. The last document in the case is written in Giant as well, yet in a graceful, flowing script obviously not Velikar's. It promises Velikar just such an alliance with the drow of Mirith Glarnon, provided the demon-priest Ilkahris is delivered to the mouth of the Oestral Abyss safe and without treachery. This document should be dated such that the prisoner transfer occurred at about the time "Shadow of the Abyss" began, and is signed only "D. Eilservs."

19. Empty Guard Room

Piles of poorly-cured furs provide bedding for two large individuals to the north and south. A massive wooden door, apparently salvaged from a large cargo wagon, has been cemented into the center of the east wall. Its huge padlock hangs open.

The door in the wall was indeed ransacked from a caravan wagon during a raid. It has been wedged into place in the wall, creating a massive cell door that is not quite large enough to block complete entry into the room beyond. Hill giant guards are no longer stationed in here as guards since their prisoner has been moved elsewhere.

20. Cell (EL 13)

This room is little more than a dark hole. The odor emanating from it can only be described as the smell of death. A short message has been carved into the north wall of the room in large blocky runes.

This was the cell in which Velikar imprisoned Ilkharis after he overthrew the old cleric. Unfortunately, Ilkharis is no longer here—Velikar recently traded him to the drow hidden near Istivin for their own foul purposes in return for promises of support when he began his new campaign of slaughter in Sterich. The drow and Ilkharis were able to move in and out of the fort without the notice of the other residents by way of teleportation magic.

The message carved in the wall is written in Giant, and was left by Ilkharis as he learned his ultimate fate from

a gloating Velikar. Translated, it reads "My fate is sealed, my luck undone. To the abyss I go." While it may appear to be nothing more than an epitaph, it actually contains a subtle clue to Ilkharis's current whereabouts. Players who express an interest in the message and know a little about the region may recall the tale of the tragic fate of the House of Oester (see "The Oestral Abyss" on page 44). The family's wretched luck and the new name of their one-time estate share themes with Ilkharis's message, although it is subtle and may go unnoticed by the PCs. If you wish, you can have a character who takes an interest in the message make a DC 30 Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check to note the subtle similarity. Ilkharis's ultimate fate in the Oestral Abyss is covered in "Wrath of the Abyss," which appears in *DUNGEON* #119.

Creature: The current resident of this room is an ill-tempered drow named Gleodites, left behind to act as a liaison to Velikar. The giants offered him one of the empty rooms as a place to stay, but Gleodites spurned those quarters, choosing instead to dwell in this spartan chamber to absorb the aura of death left behind by the stricken giant. He spends most of his time sitting cross-legged on the floor in a meditative trance, but sometimes accompanies the giants on their twilight hunting parties to take part in some bloodletting.

If he notices the PCs, he stands and says in a light voice, "You're too late. We have him now."

Gleodites, male drow rogue 6/fighter 6: CR 13; Medium humanoid; HD 6d6+6 plus 6d10+6; hp 71; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +10; Grp +11; Atk +17 melee (1d6+5 plus poison/18–20, *+2 rapier*) or +15 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); Full Atk +17/+12 melee (1d6+5 plus poison/18–20, *+2 rapier*) or +15 ranged (1d4 plus poison/19–20, masterwork hand crossbow); SA sneak attack +3d6, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., evasion, light blindness, spell resistance 23, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +4 (+6 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 17.

Skills: Balance +15, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +5, Climb +10, Hide +21, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +3, Listen +7, Move Silently +21, Search +12, Spot +7, Tumble +16.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Improved Disarm, Mobility, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier).

Languages: Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon, Giant.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 12): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire.*

Possessions: *+1 shadow silent moves studded leather, +1 buckler, +2 rapier* (poisoned with a dose of drow poison), masterwork hand crossbow with 10 hand crossbow bolts (each coated with a dose of drow poison), *cloak of resistance +1, 3 potions of haste.*

Tactics: Gleodites revels in the opportunity to attack intruders. If he has a chance, he drinks a *potion of haste* before combat begins. He generally fights with Combat Expertise used to full effect to increase his armor class, and uses Improved Feint to sneak attack his victims. He uses his poisoned crossbow bolts against archers and spellcasters who try to maintain ranged superiority.

21 Collapsed Cavern (EL 14)

A narrow broken ledge is all that remains of the floor of this chamber. The rest has collapsed into a natural cavern 25 feet below. The lower cavern is larger than the chamber above, and is strewn with rubble and the ruins of what once looked like a large kitchen and mess hall.

This large cavern existed below what was once the kitchen and mess hall; a well opened into the cave and was used to dispose of garbage. Years ago the floor finally gave out, dropping the contents of these rooms into the cavern below. Now it's the abode of the blue dragon Asiroxus, who widened the passage that already existed between this area and area **17** by burrowing through the rock in order to accommodate her girth.

Creature: Asiroxus is an adult blue dragon who recently agreed to an alliance with Velikar. She came down from the mountains in order to have a little sport with the hapless plains dwellers but learned caution after a run-in with a powerful wizard. When she encountered Velikar, she joined forces with him in order to wreak havoc upon the upstart humans and their ilk. She enjoys intimidating the giants (especially the frost giants) and occasionally allows Velikar to ride her when she goes out hunting. Velikar appeases her with treasure until the time they can launch their attack on the lowlanders in earnest.

Asiroxus, female adult blue dragon: CR 14; Huge dragon (earth); HD 21d12+105; hp 241; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.,

burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 32, touch 8, flat-footed 32; Base Atk +21; Grp +37; Atk +27 melee (3d8+8, bite); Full Atk +27 melee (3d8+8, bite) and +25 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws) and +25 melee (1d8+4, 2 wings) and +25 melee (2d6+12, tail slap); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (bite 15 ft.); SA breath weapon (100-ft. line, 12d8 electricity, Ref DC 25 for half), crush (2d8+12, Reflex save DC 5 avoids), frightful presence (DC 23), spell-like abilities, spells; SQ blindsense 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 120 ft., immunity to electricity, sleep, and paralysis, keen senses, low-light vision, spell resistance 21, sound imitation (DC 25); AL LE; SV Fort +17, Ref +12, Will +15; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +27, Concentration +29, Diplomacy +5, Hide +16, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Listen +29, Search +27, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +17, Spot +29.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Eschew Material Components, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Terran.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 6): 3/day—*create/destroy water*, *ventriloquism* (DC 14).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/5; caster level 5): 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *ray of frost* (+19 ranged touch), *read magic*; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *shocking grasp* (+27 touch); 2nd—*fog cloud*, *bear's endurance*.

Tactics: Asiroxus is wary of intruders, and casts *mage armor* several times a day to raise her AC (her stats above reflect this in her Armor Class, so reduce her number of 1st-level spells available by 1–3 depending upon how late in the day it is when she's encountered). She usually lurks in the eastern portion of the cavern, out of sight

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Shadow of the Abyss" is designed for four 11th-level characters, but can modified for parties of higher and lower levels as indicated below:

8th- to 10th-level PCs: The adventure will be very difficult for a party of this level, so you might want to allow more player characters or give the party the opportunity to rest within the fort. Remove one or two gorgons from the encounter with Sufrira. To even the odds later in the adventure, reduce the numbers of giants in the border fort or their character levels to keep the Encounter Levels commensurate with the party's level. Reduce Velikar's cleric levels so his CR is only one above the party level. You might want to consider having the blue dragon encountered separately in the wilderness when the party is at full strength, or have her absent from the adventure altogether—she's out on a hunting trip when the PCs arrive. Of course, she would want to take much of her treasure with her to make sure the mangy giants don't get it.

High-Level PCs: Pull out all the stops for higher-level PCs. Add character levels as necessary to the giants and add more dire tigers to the bailey to keep the EL challenging. Have the whole fort on alert and the inhabitants fight in support of each other. Velikar, Gleodites, and/or Asiroxus joining in the defense of the fort would certainly increase the challenge. Be sure to increase the rewards proportionally to how much you beat on your players.

from the entrance above. Make opposed Listen and Move Silently checks if the party attempts to sneak in here. If she is alerted to their presence, she casts *bear's endurance* and *shield* and waits until one peaks down under the overhang before unleashing her breath weapon. She flees through the northeast tunnel to return to the mountains if hardpressed.

Treasure: Asiroxus's treasures are stored in a heap at the back of her lair. She has not currently gathered much treasure and is impatient to begin the plunder of the lowlands as a result. Her modest hoard consists of 10,550 cp, 2,300 sp, 4,800 gp, 75 pp, five badly flawed diamonds worth 250 gp each, a masterwork harp inlayed with gold and fashioned to resemble an elf maiden worth 1,225 gp, a *+1 dwarven waraxe*, a masterwork composite longbow (Str 18), a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of delay poison*, and a *ring of climbing*.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After searching the fort and discovering Ilkharis to be missing, the party may think they have reached at a dead end. Of course, the adventure continues in the next issue of DUNGEON, at which point the PCs discover that Ilkharis is now imprisoned by the drow deep in the Oestral Abyss. The Campaign Arc concludes with "Wrath of the Abyss," in DUNGEON #119.

If "Shadow of the Abyss" is being played as a stand-alone adventure, the party likely doesn't care about Ilkharis's fate. Instead, with the giants at the border fort defeated, the PCs can return to Istivin to collect their promised reward from the military. Their employer is likely to hire them again if the documents and plans from area **16** are revealed, and the party could find themselves full-time giant slayers for the March of Sterich using the Campaign Seed on page 53. Alternately, the Sterich government might be more concerned with the threat of drow lurking under their noses. In this case a group of heroes might be needed to root out and destroy this hidden drow stronghold. Either way, the party has made valuable allies in Istivin and will have all the work they want in the future.

Greg A. Vaughan is the author of "Tammeraut's Fate" (DUNGEON #106), "Torrents of Dread" (DUNGEON #114), and "Touch of the Abyss" (DUNGEON #117).

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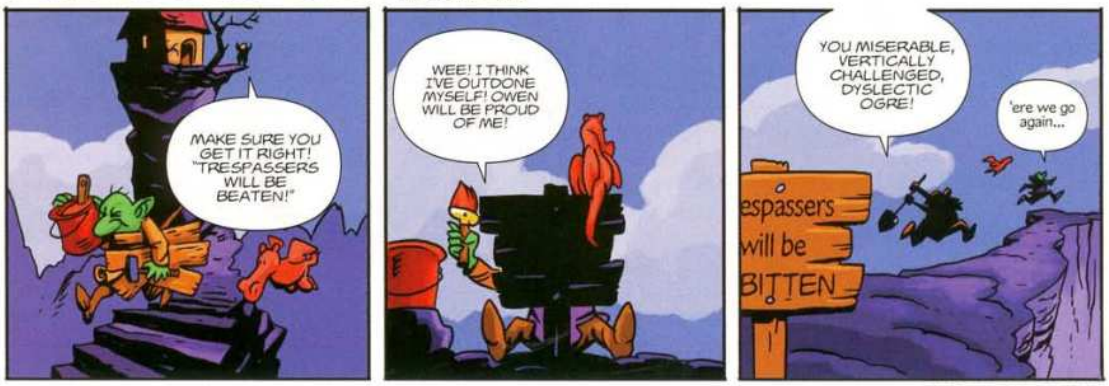
THE PORTENT

By Peter Bergting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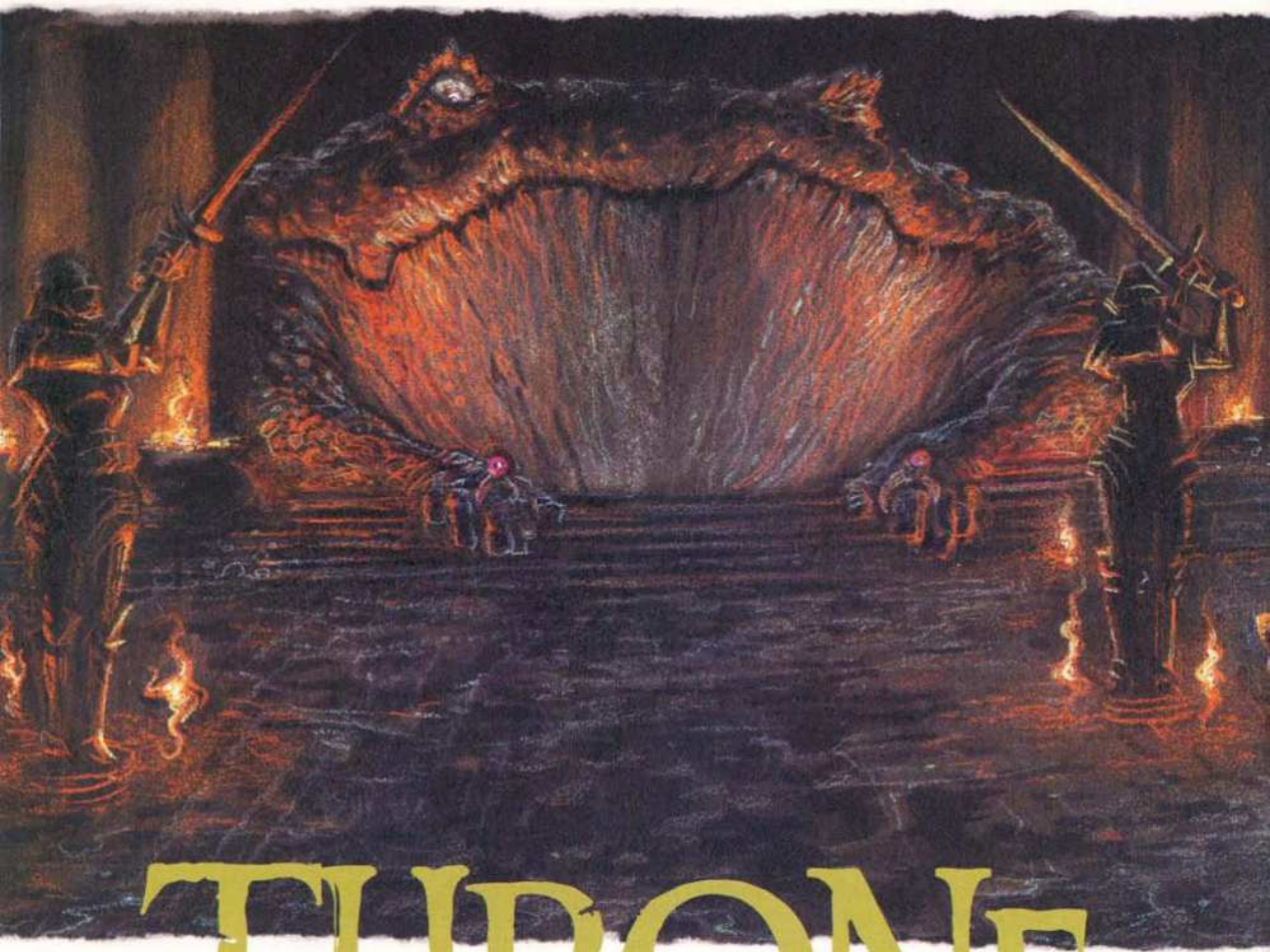


THRONE OF IUZ

BY JOHN SIMCOE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEREK THOMPSON
CARTOGRAPHY BY MIKE SCHLEY

GREYHAWK • High-level • Temperate Forest & Dungeon Crawl

Many years ago, a region of the vast Vesve Forest underwent a gruesome transformation. Once pristine woodland warped into a horrific tangle of deadly bogs, acidic gases, tortured trees, and treacherous terrain. Although this sixty-mile swath of corruption (now called the Defiled Glades) was the work of unknown agents, none appreciated the transformation as much as the fiendish demigod Iuz the Old.

"Throne of Iuz" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 15th-level characters. It is set in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, but can be easily adapted to other game worlds as detailed in the "Adapting the Adventure" sidebar.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

On his first visit to the Defiled Glades, Iuz beheld a strange sight. Amid all the danger, a simple forest toad hopped about, oblivious to the deadly fumes and acid mires. Impressed by its tenacity, Iuz gifted the toad with incredible intelligence, immense size, and an appetite for destruction, qualities that uniquely suited the toad for a specific mission Iuz had in mind—the destruction of the Vesve Forest and all of its inhabitants.

It took the toad five years to come to grips with his new intelligence. Eventually, he ventured out of the Defiled Glades and into the Vesve itself. Before long, he happened upon an orc tribe called the Hant. Initially, the toad simply crushed and ate what orcs he encountered, but he soon grew bored with mindless mayhem. He knew that Iuz expected him to repay him for the gift of intelligence, so he hatched a plan. The first step in this plan required nothing less than becoming the god-king of the Hant.

The toad approached the Hant tribe again, but rather than attack the horrified orcs, he announced himself as a holy avatar of the orc god Gruumsh, and told them that he had been sent to the world to lead their tribe to glory. To prove his sincerity, the toad calmly summoned the tribe's clerics and asked them to perform a gruesome ritual—the Sacred Gouging of his eye with a wooden stake to honor one-eyed Gruumsh. As the toad bore the procedure with stoic pride, he called a challenge to the tribe's warlord: kill or be killed. The Hant war chief and the toad battled, and not surprisingly, the war chief fell. As the toad swallowed the dying orc, it crowned itself King Bog One-eye, ruler of the Hant, and more importantly, the Hant army.

For nearly a year, King Bog One-eye let the Hant ravage the forest. Over the course of many raids, the orc tribe grew

powerful indeed—during this time they brought down a number of impressive creatures over the years, including a grace of unicorns, a powerful nymph druid, and even a young adult gold dragon. More importantly, the bloody campaign secured their trust in their titanic leader.

With lordship over the Hant solidified, King Bog One-eye separated his army from the rest of the tribe. He led his troops to a mystical elven funeral effigy known as the Serpent Mound, located about forty miles northeast of the village of Flameflower. The remainder of the Hant host returned to a stronghold a few miles inside the border of the Defiled Glades.

The Serpent Mound is a huge magic-infused excavation in the shape of a coiled snake. King Bog One-eye chose it as the Hant army's protective headquarters while he plotted to completely destroy the Vesve. Inside the Serpent Mound, a winding underground tunnel lined with the burial vaults of more than six hundred wood elves ends at a massive underground cathedral that now serves as King Bog's home. Within this lair he and his most trusted minions plotted the second stage of the Vesve's destruction.

King Bog One-eye envisioned creating a magical artifact to serve as a focus for the Defiled Glades, allowing the glades to expand and permanently befoul the entire forest. Yet for all his cunning, the toad knew little of magic. For advice, he turned to his favored lieutenant, an orc druid named Kabik. One of the few who understood King Bog One-eye's true allegiance to Iuz, it was Kabik who hit upon the idea of crafting this focus in the image of a throne dedicated to Iuz. Yet still, the creation of such a potent artifact seemed to be beyond their means. Thus did King Bog turn to Iuz for aid.

Pleased that his creation was finally paying off, Iuz sent a trio of talented stone giants to craft the throne and a flock of demons to serve as Bog's personal guard. Iuz then traveled incognito to the plane of Limbo, and convinced a pair of slaad item crafters that King Bog was a lost Slaad god. Intrigued, the two slaadi investigated. While not completely convinced of Bog's divinity, the opportunity to infuse a large section of the Material Plane with chaos was enough for them to pledge their aid. With the giants and the slaadi, Kabik and King Bog have all they need to complete their devious plan. Now all they need is time.

Adventure Synopsis

The player characters travel to an ancient elven burial site known as the Serpent Mound and find a large number of orcs stationed there. Although the PCs' reasons for traveling to the Serpent Mound can vary, they certainly can't achieve their goals without entering the orc encampment, an action that likely results in an attack by the orcs. The PCs soon learn that the orcs are led by an unusual chieftain; a titanic intelligent toad. Worse, they discover the toad's plans for the Vesve Forest involve nothing less than its destruction. In order to save the forest from this fate, the PCs must confront King Bog One-eye in his underground lair deep below the Serpent Mound. If the PCs fail to halt the construction of the *Throne of Iuz* within a month of their first contact with the orcs, the Vesve is doomed.

Adventure Hooks

Although the primary goal for the PCs in "Throne of Iuz" should be the destruction of King Bog's terrible throne and the salvation of the Vesve Forest, their initial reasons for traveling to the Serpent Mound can vary. No one beyond the Hant and Iuz know of the plan to defile the Vesve, and the PCs only stumble upon the nefarious plot after traveling to the Serpent Mound for other reasons. Three possible hooks are outlined below.

- A caravan of gnome merchants has gone missing. The gnomes left the fishing and trapping settlement of Verbeeg Hill (population 1,100) several days ago, taking the Ironstead Road through the southern Vesve Forest. They passed through the elf village of Flameflower (population 500) on schedule, but never reached the secluded woodsmen village of Ironstead. The PCs are contacted by a gnome cleric named Linksa Ostroff; she's heard of the PCs' prior exploits and hopes they can help track down what happened to the caravan. Her primary concern is for the caravan's leader—her father, a merchant lord named Milo Ostroff. She explains that Milo did his share of adventuring years ago but retired when she was born, taking on the more sedentary life of a shopkeeper. He organized this caravan to help set up a new shop in Chendl, and took the Ironstead Road against the advice of his colleagues. And now, it seems, he's gone missing. Linska can provide a detailed description of her father, along with one of his belongings if the PCs wish to use *scrying* to try to find him. If the PCs can find him and rescue him, Linska is prepared to offer one of her greatest treasures as a reward—a *minor cloak of displacement*.

- If there's a half-orc in the party, a weapon discovered in a prior adventure bears a series of markings in Orc upon it. The script is quite archaic, but anyone who can read the language can decipher it with a successful DC 25 Decipher Script check. The script reads: "Forged by the breath of Gruumsh. Shaped by smiths of the Hant. Powered by our chieftain's blood." *Identify* and *analyze dweomer* indicate that the weapon has an additional number of magic auras that aren't accounted for by the weapon's actual powers. *Legend lore*, *vision*, a successful DC 25 bardic knowledge check, or several weeks of research reveals that the weapon is likely a dormant *orcblood* weapon, perhaps even an intelligent one. The "powered by our chieftain's blood" seems to indicate that the weapon can be awakened if it is used to slay an orc chieftain—specifically, an orc chieftain of the Hant tribe. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check reveals that the Hant orcs live in the southern Vesve Forest. In order to awaken the weapon (which is in fact an intelligent *orcblood* weapon—design it to fit your

campaign), its owner must seek these orcs out and defeat one of their chieftains. In "Throne of Iuz," both King Bog and General Grauss are appropriate "chieftains" for this purpose.

- A half-elf noble named Aelinar who lives in or near the PCs' current base recently discovered that his distant ancestor, an elf hero named Althinan Lurialian was buried in a strange place in the Vesve Forest called the Serpent Mound. According to family lore, this ancestor was entombed with a powerful magic sword originally intended to be handed down through the generations. Aelinar is growing old, and desperately wants something of consequence to hand down to his only son when he comes of age in a few years. He's uncovered an approximate location for the Serpent Mound, and asks the PCs to travel there and retrieve the sword. In return, he can reward the party with up to 25,000 gp in coin, art, or magic.

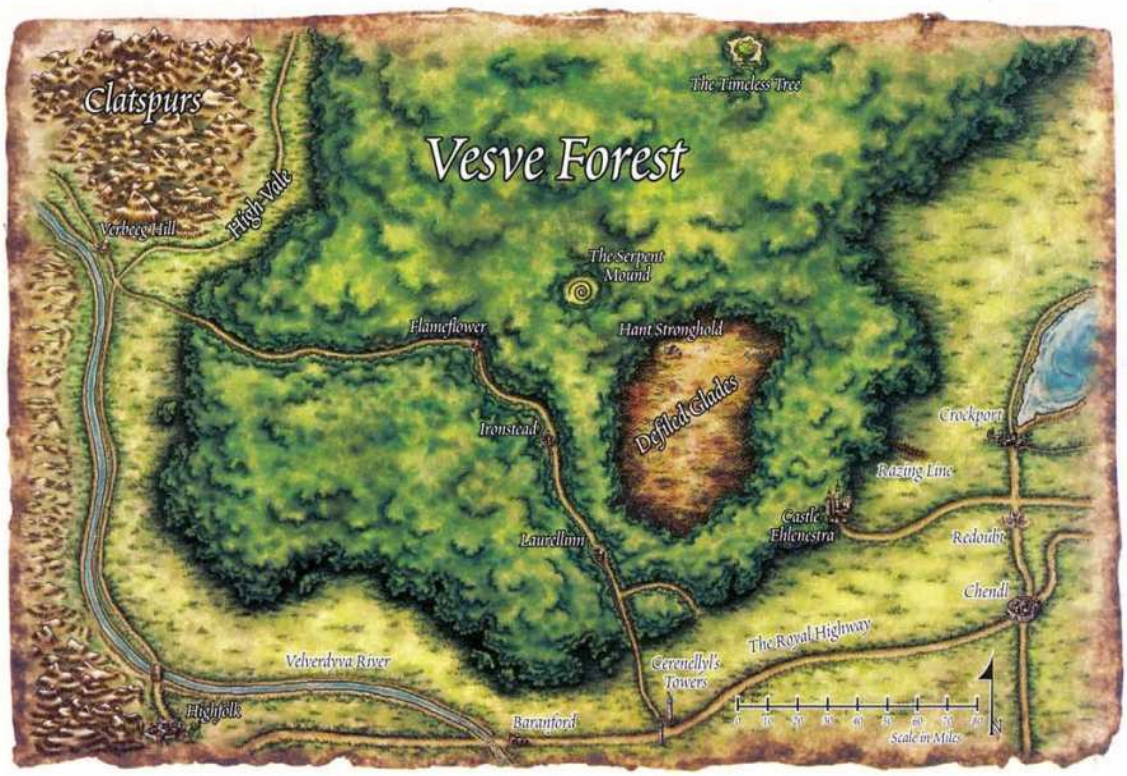
CHAPTER ONE: THE HANT ENCAMPMENT

Whatever their reasons for entering the Vesve Forest, the PCs should eventually arrive at the Serpent Mound, an ancient elf burial site hidden in the deep Vesve about 40 miles northeast of the village of Flameflower.

If the PCs are looking for the gnome Milo, they can certainly travel the Ironstead Road, looking for clues. About 20 miles south of Flameflower, the PCs come across several ruined wagons, dead horses, and other battlefield debris. A search reveals that no bodies or trade goods remain, but the caravan was indeed a gnome-sized caravan. A PC with Track can make a DC 15 Survival check to recognize numerous orc footprints in the ground. Likewise, a successful DC 15 Survival check allows such a character to track the orcs and their gnome prisoners all the way to the Serpent Mound, although this is a 40-mile hike through the woods. Feel free to spice up the journey with encounters from the table on page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Rather than physically searching for him, high-level characters can track down Milo more efficiently by using powerful divination magic. They can use *scrying* to determine where he is (see area **6**), at which point *teleport* can provide the PCs with a quick way to infiltrate the camp. Other spells such as *discern location*, *commune*, and even *locate creature* can pinpoint the gnome's position; all should eventually lead the PCs to the Serpent Mound.

If the PCs are seeking a Hant chieftain to activate a dormant *orcblood* weapon, they should learn that the orcs of the Hant tribe have been curiously localized of late. A successful DC 30 Gather Information check made in Verbeeg Hill, Highfolk, or any other settlement near the Vesve reveals that Hant raids have become quite rare lately, and that many of their traditional villages have been abandoned. Further research should point the PCs toward the Serpent Mound—perhaps a traveler



passed near it recently and saw the Hant army encamped there.

Finally, if the PCs are seeking Aelinar's ancestral weapon, he's already done the work for them. He can give the PCs exact directions to the Serpent Mound, but he has no idea that the orcs have chosen it as their encampment.

Approaching the Serpent Mound

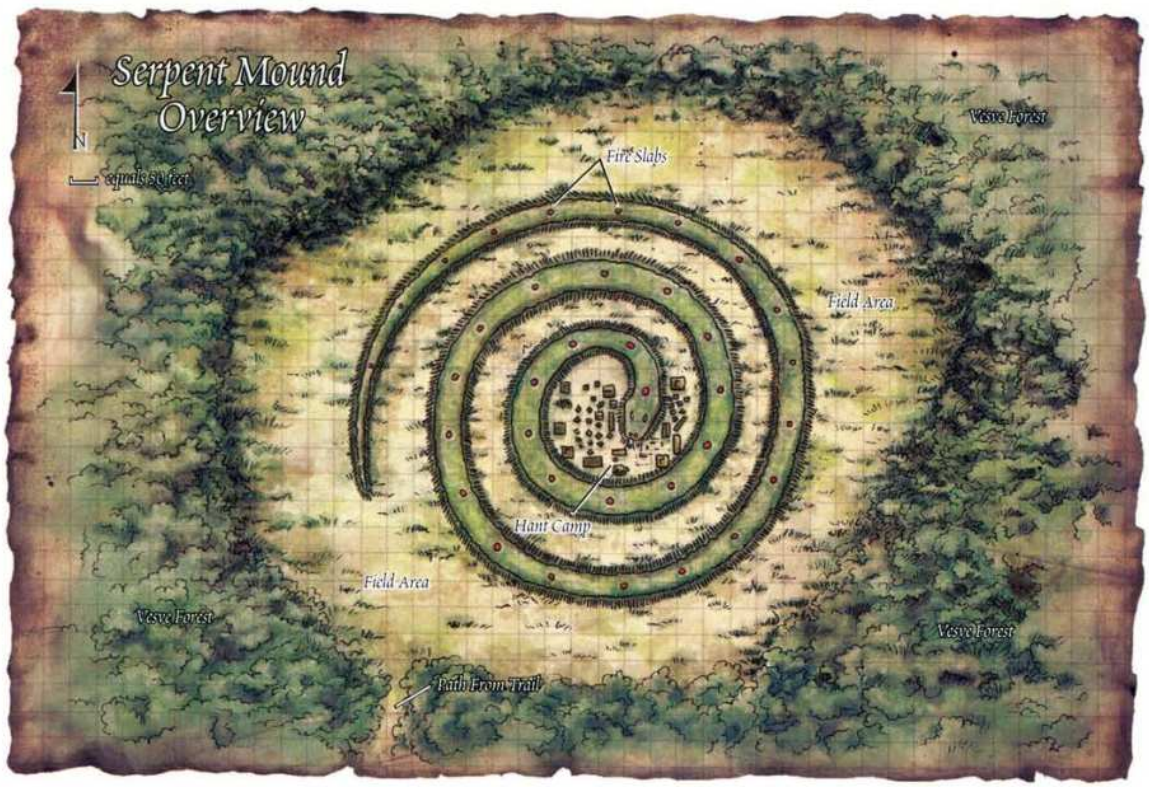
The Serpent Mound is a large mausoleum constructed by an ancient clan of elves who have long since died out. The mound rests inside a sizable forest clearing. On the surface, the site appears to be a massive burial mound built in the shape of a coiled snake. The snake's body is in fact a 50-foot-wide hill, spiraling to its apex 20 feet above the forest floor. The snake's mouth at the center opens into a descending tunnel. As it winds its way into the hill, the tunnel passes 185 "ribs," 10-foot long protrusions from the main tunnel that hold the remains of hundreds of elves buried in the Serpent Mound. At the end of the tunnel the ancient elves built a massive underground cathedral for burial and religious ceremonies. This chamber now serves as King Bog One-eye's lair.

The Hant camp is situated at the center of the Serpent Mound spiral. The camp's layout illustrates the nomadic roots of its denizens, in that most of the structures consist of tents that can be broken down and transported during times of war. Nevertheless, a few of the buildings are permanent structures, including the four 100-foot-tall watchtowers at the camp's edges. Each location in the camp is detailed separately in this chapter. Since high-level parties have a large number of options available, make sure you're familiar with the layout of the camp, its inhabitants, and the nature of its various structures so you can quickly determine the results of any approach.

The Camp's Denizens

Although orcs are sensitive to light and thus dazzled by sunlight (suffering a –1 penalty on attack rolls, Spot checks, and Search checks), the encampment remains fairly busy during the day. Characters that observe the camp can estimate the total number of orcs at about 100. In fact, the Hant army contains 105 orcs and several allied creatures. These orcs represent the finest soldiers the Hant tribe has to offer, and a group of nine should be enough to challenge a party of 15th-level characters, not to mention an army of more than ten times that amount.

Although the army itself is under the control of King Bog One-eye, the titanic toad doesn't often venture above ground. He prefers to lurk in the depths below, leaving the day-to-day management of the army to his orc captains Lieutenant Kabik and General Grauss. Apart from these two, few of the camp's denizens are aware of their leader's actual plans for the Vesve. They've been told that they are to wait at this ancient elven burial ground until the time is right for a final assault on their enemies. For the most part, the orc soldiers are content to wait, although their



growing impatience has resulted in several impromptu raids on surrounding regions. These raids are more to give the orcs the chance to let off some steam than to actually gather supplies or capture prisoners.

Each Hant member spends 10 hours each day on guard duty of some sort, a few hours eating and relaxing, and about 8 hours sleeping before he's called back to duty. With this schedule, it's not uncommon to see Hant soldiers and clerics wandering around visiting or goofing around during their off hours. During the day, orc sentinels stationed in the watchtowers keep squinted eyes out for intruders. During the night, they light torches along the inner coil of the serpent; orcs may have darkvision, but only to a limited range. The torches allow them to keep an eye on the camp's perimeter from the watchtowers.

Hant Patrols (EL 15)

The Hant orcs also patrol the Serpent Mound clearing and the nearby forest on a semi-regular basis. Hant patrols are typically one of two varieties—ground patrols and aerial patrols. Each is detailed below.

Ground Patrol: A ground patrol consists of six Hant soldiers led by a single Hant captain. Three ground patrols are active at all times, but generally, only one ground patrol is near or in the encampment itself. The other two are out in the surrounding woods, within a few miles of the Serpent Mound. A ground patrol attempts to engage intruders in melee as quickly as possible—if confronted by an enemy that is faster than them or can fly, they either attack with their shotputs or immediately retreat to the encampment to report the incident to Grauss.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (6): CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 4d12+8 plus 5d10+10; hp 77 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +14; Atk +11 melee (1d8+16, *+1 trident* wielded two-handed with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13 ranged (2d6+6/17–20/×3, *+1 returning orc shotput*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+16, *+1 trident* wielded two-handed with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13 ranged (2d6+6/17–20/×3, *+1 returning orc shotput*); SA rage 2/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Jump +9, Listen +7, Ride +14.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc shotput), Far Shot, Improved Critical (orc shotput), Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (orc shotput), Weapon Specialization (orc shotput).

Languages: Orc.

Rage: hp 95; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Grp +16; Atk +13 melee (1d8+19, *+1 trident* wielded two-handed with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13 ranged (2d6+8/17–20/×3, *+1 returning orc shotput*); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+19, *+1 trident* wielded two-handed with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13

ranged (2d6+8/17–20/×3, *+1 returning orc shotput*); SV Fort +12, Will +4; Str 24, Con 18; Jump +11.

Possessions: *+1 breastplate, +1 returning orc shotput, +1 trident, potion of cure serious wounds*, 150 gp.

Hant Captain, orc barbarian 6/fighter 6: CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 6d12+12 plus 6d10+12; hp 101; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +12; Grp +18; Atk +16 melee (2d4+20/15–20, *+1 wounding falchion* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13 ranged (1d8+6/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (2d4+20/15–20, *+1 wounding falchion* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8+6/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA rage 2/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., improved uncanny dodge, light sensitivity, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 22, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 6, Cha 11.

Skills: Intimidate +15, Jump +9, Ride +15, Survival +7.

Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (falchion), Weapon Specialization (falchion).

Languages: Orc.

Rage: hp 125; AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18; Grp +20; Atk +18 melee (2d4+23/15–20, *+1 wounding falchion* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13 ranged (1d8+6/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (2d4+23/15–20, *+1 wounding falchion* with 4 points in Power Attack) or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8+6/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SV Fort +14, Will +6; Jump +11.

Possessions: *+2 half plate, +1 wounding falchion*, masterwork composite longbow (+6 Str), *amulet of natural armor +1, potion of cure serious wounds, potion of fly*, 45 pp.

Air Patrol: Air patrols consist of four Hant soldiers mounted on advanced chimeras. One patrol is active at all times. These patrols regularly make sweeps of the area around the Serpent Mound and the surrounding forest. A second patrol is generally ready for action at any time, with a third patrol available after a delay 1d6 minutes.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (4): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Advanced Chimera (4): CR 9; Large magical beast; HD 13d10+65; hp 141; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (poor); AC 22, touch

Exotic Weapon—Orc Shotput

Orcs favor orc shotputs not only for the considerable damage they do, but also for the ease of their construction. This grapefruit-sized sphere of crude iron is a deadly projectile in the hands of those trained in its use. The orc shotput first appeared in *Sword & Fist*, and was reprinted in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*.

Orc Shotput, ranged exotic weapon: Cost 10 gp; Damage (Small) 1d10; Damage (Medium) 2d6; Critical 19–20/×3; Range Increment 10 ft.; Weight 15 lb.; Type bludgeoning.

12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +13; Grp +23; Atk +18 melee (3d6+6, bite); Full Atk +18 melee (3d6+6, bite) and +16 melee (2d6+6, bite) and +16 melee (1d8+6, gore) and +16 melee (1d6+3, 2 claws); SA breath weapon; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +8; Str 23, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +3 (+7 in scrubland or brush), Listen +11, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Hover, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Multiattack.

Languages: Draconic, Orc.

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor +1, ring of sustenance.*

Diplomacy, Deception, and Stealth

Although the Hant are a warlike and brutal troop of orcs, a skillful party can still utilize diplomacy and/or stealth to explore the encampment. The orcs suffer a –1 penalty on their Spot checks during daylight hours, so chances of sneaking into the camp during the day are marginally better than at night. Assume that all of the camp's inhabitants take 10 on Listen and Spot checks. If they spot intruders skulking about the camp, they immediately raise the alarm.

The PCs might wish to try using Diplomacy or Intimidate to convince the orcs to let them enter the camp. If the PCs successfully disguise themselves as creatures that might be perceived as allies, the initial attitude of everything in camp is unfriendly; otherwise, the orcs are initially hostile. Before the PCs are allowed into the camp without a fight, they'll need to convince one of the camp's leaders of their peaceful intentions. In order to secure an audience with Grauss or Kabik, the PCs must first successfully adjust the camp's attitude to friendly—doing so merely grants the PCs an audience at the edge of camp with the two orc leaders (King Bog has no interest in diplomacy). At this time, the PCs must make the two leaders helpful from their initial hostile (or unfriendly, if the PCs are appropriately disguised) attitude in order to be granted access to the camp.

If they're granted access, Grauss orders two ground patrols to escort the PCs at all times. The orcs aren't interested in handing over their gnome prisoners to the PCs for free, but certainly agree to sell or ransom the prisoners for 1,000 gp per prisoner. If a PC with the orc blood racial feature wishes to challenge Grauss or Kabik to combat in order to awaken his dormant weapon, the orc leader agrees to such a duel only if a PC can make a successful DC 35 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. If the orc leader is killed, though, the PCs would be well advised to leave quickly before the remaining orcs lose their patience. Unfortunately King Bog has placed the underground portion of the Serpent Mound off limits to anyone except Grauss, Kabik, and the slaadi; no amount of diplomacy can convince the orcs to let the PCs in there to look for an ancestral weapon. If this is the party's initial goal in the camp, they'll need to resort to stealth or combat.

Prisoners

It's likely that the PCs capture some of the orcs alive. Captured prisoners are hostile, and must be made at least friendly before they answer any questions. If successfully questioned, Hant guards believe that most of the precious items that have been captured by them over the years are stored somewhere inside the Serpent Mound. This is untrue (most of this loot financed the creation of the *Throne of Iuz*), but General Grauss and Lieutenant Kabik let the Hant believe it. Captured orcs can also give basic information about most of the structures in the encampment, including how many guards are stationed at each location. They don't know that the orcs in the armory are actually slaadi, nor do they have any clues about King Bog's secret plan to devastate the Vesve; they assume that they're here waiting for a chance to strike on Flameflower or one of the other nearby villages. If asked about their leader, captured orcs puff up with pride and brag about how their chieftain is the chosen avatar of Gruumsh, and that he'll certainly arrive by the next sunrise to free them and crush the PCs into paste. Of course, King Bog has no real interest in saving captured orcs, although he might use them to find the PCs by having Kabik *scry* upon one of the orcs.

The Camp at Alarm

When an alarm is sounded, all on-duty Hant leave their posts and gather at the meeting pavilion (area **10**) immediately, unless they see an obvious enemy to assault, in which case they attack. Off-duty Hant are considered to be sleeping, wounded, or otherwise engaged, and are delayed for 1d6 minutes before they can answer the alarm.

Once the alarm sounds, the orc camp responds in the following manner. Feel free to alter the following tactics to account for the party's position or approach as the alarm is sounded. Likewise, if the party makes numerous raids on the camp, the orcs' resources and numbers should slowly dwindle.

All orcs within 60 feet of the PCs engage them in melee and attempt to keep them busy while the rest of the camp musters a response. Orcs not in combat with the PCs head for the meeting pavilion (area **10**); any orcs that come within 60 feet of an intruder instead engage the intruder in battle. Grauss moves to the meeting pavilion as soon as possible to organize the orcs into groups to defend key areas of the camp. One air patrol swoops to engage the PCs, while the other two patrols hold back in reserve. If the PCs mount an aerial attack, all three air patrols move to intercept them.

The two slaadi in area **7** do not join the fight if an alarm is sounded. Rather, they retreat into the armory to wait the battle out. The giants in area **19** approach the site of battle to support the orcs with hurled boulders.

One of the vrocks stationed at area **12** teleports into the cathedral below to warn King Bog and Kabik of the attack. The vrock teleports back to area **12** once this message is delivered. Once aware of trouble, Kabik casts *air walk*, quickened *bear's endurance*, *freedom of movement*, quickened *barkskin*, *stoneskin*, *death ward*, and *true seeing* (in that order) on King Bog over the next five rounds, after which he and King Bog

travel to the refuse pile (area **15**) with a *transport via plants* spell (moving from the mushrooms in the cathedral to the mushrooms on the refuse pile). If the PCs are still in the area by the time King Bog arrives, the titanic toad charges into the fray to attack them; he does not pursue enemies beyond the radius of the Serpent Mound clearing. Kabik uses his long-range attack spells like *call lightning storm* and *entangle* on the PCs.

If Bog is reduced to fewer than half of his hit points, he uses his *ring of spell storing* to *teleport* back to the cathedral, taking Kabik with him if he can get to him (otherwise Kabik flees back to the cathedral as best he can). Forcing King Bog to flee is one way to break the morale of the orcs in the camp; so is killing at least sixty of the orcs in battle. For these purposes, Kabik and Grauss are worth ten orcs; if the PCs kill both these orc leaders, they need only kill an additional forty orcs to break the tribe's morale. Once the orc morale is broken, the surviving orcs abandon their camp and try to flee into the woods.

If the PCs flee, the orcs pursue the PCs into the forest or through the sky for 300 yards before returning to the Serpent Mound. If the PCs flee, be sure to give them a thorough description of what they see and hear, as the orcs will follow this same plan during following attacks.

Repeated Forays

Although the inhabitants of the camp are fierce, they aren't particularly imaginative. They don't alter their tactics, even if the PCs continue to attack the camp day after day. Keep track of the number of orcs slain; once the PCs manage to defeat an effective total of sixty, the remaining orcs flee into the forest.

Of course, if the PCs take too long, King Bog eventually does something about it. He's wary of contacting Iuz, since reports of failure are likely to result in the Old One hurting him more than he hurts his enemies, but he's not above organizing hunting parties to track down the PCs to ambush them in their camp.

Encampment Key

This section provides details on the various locations in the orc encampment. As the PCs continue to attack the camp, remember to make adjustments to the number of enemies that are found in each area.

1. Lookout Towers (EL 12)

A wooden watchtower rises about a hundred feet into the sky. The top serves as an open-air observation deck from which a rope ladder dangles all the way down to the ground below.

Four towers have been built at each corner of the Hant camp. The towers reach above the Serpent Mound and give the guards manning them an excellent view of the entire clearing. Each tower can be accessed by rope ladders that can be drawn up by the guards in times of alarm.

Creatures: Three Hant soldiers man each lookout tower. These soldiers rotate

every 10 hours. Each tower is equipped with a signal flare and a whistle for the guards to use to raise the alarm.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (3): hp 77 each; see page 63.

2. Wood Pile

This heap of cut wood is piled haphazardly into a towering fifteen-foot-high mound. Some of the timbers have been hacked into smaller pieces for the forge and campfires, but there are still a fair number of huge timbers and logs.

The wood in this pile was harvested by the Hant and is used to feed the fires burning on the fire slabs, individual campfires, the armory's forge, and the cooking pit. Larger timbers are used to repair the permanent buildings as necessary.

Holy Symbol of Iuz

3. Storage Tents (EL 9)

This eight-foot-tall tan tent has its only flaps tightly tied. Unlike the smaller tents in the area, it seems to be in fairly good repair.

Two of these large storage tents are located in the encampment. The orcs use them to store a variety of mundane weapons, armor, equipment, household goods, and gear, much of it salvaged from raids over the past several years. The gear here is fairly unremarkable.

Creature: Each storage tent is guarded by a single Hant soldier who sits at the entrance of the tent. Guard duty here is fairly dull, and there's a 35% chance the orc is asleep.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5: hp 77; see page 63.

4. Fire Slabs

A large bonfire burns atop this circular slab of carved stone. The slab's rim is decorated with ornate carvings that depict elves performing a ceremony near a fire. Some of the elf carvings have been crudely vandalized.

The Serpent Mound is fitted with forty of these fire slabs, spaced long the top of the serpent's "back." When the ancient elves originally installed these fire slabs, they were all magical items known as *braziers of law revealing*; whenever a lawfully-aligned creature approached within 60 feet of a lit brazier, the creature glowed with a sickly gray light. Time and vandalism have taken their toll on these braziers, and while they still function as braziers (the orcs keep them lit at night to aid in spotting distant intruders), their magical qualities have long since faded.

Legend lore or a successful DC 30 Knowledge (History) or bardic knowledge check reveals that the mound's creators used these braziers to detect those who had become tainted by the lure of civilization. Only those who had not forsaken the carefree elven lifestyle were permitted membership and eventual burial within the mound.

5. Barracks (EL Varies)

This small tent is nothing more than a simple four-person tent. The tent is ragged and stained from years of use.

Each tent is tied to a 10-ft. by 12-ft. fitted wood frame. The tents open on one side only. Inside each tent are four beds.

Creatures: Each of these tents houses a number of Hant soldiers, although the three tents closest to area **12** actually house Hant clerics instead. There's only a 40% chance that any particular tent is occupied at the time the PCs arrive, and if they are occupied, there's a 75% chance the occupants are sleeping.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (1d4): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Hant cleric, male orc cleric 9 (1d4): CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8+18; hp 62; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/×3, *+1 spear*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+4/×3, *+1 spear*); SA spells, rebuke undead (3/day); SQ darkvision 60, light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 11.

Skills: Concentration +8, Knowledge (religion) +5.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (spear)[B].

Languages: Common, Orc.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 9): 0—*cure minor wounds* (4), *guidance*, *resistance*; 1st—*bane* (DC 13), *cure light wounds* (2), *enlarge person*[D], *entropic shield*, *obscuring mist*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *desecrate*, *hold person* (DC 14), *shield other*, *spiritual weapon*[D] (+8 melee, 1d8+3/×3); 3rd—*contagion* (DC 15), *cure serious wounds*, *searing light* (+5 ranged touch), *magic vestment*[D]; 4th—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds*, *divine power*[D]; 5th—*flame strike*[D] (DC 17), *slay living* (DC 17).

D: Domain spell; Domains: Strength, War.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt*, masterwork heavy steel shield, *+1 spear*, *wand of bull's strength* (15 charges), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (15 charges), *ring of counterspells* (*hold person*), *potion of lesser restoration*, red garnet unholy symbol worth 100 gp.

6. Jail Cart (EL 11)

A wheeled cart sits in the field here. The cart is reinforced with steel plates along its sides, roof, and floor. Tiny windows on each side are barred, and on the

MILO OSTROFF

back of the cart is a heavy steel door with an imposing lock secured around a latch. In the back window, tiny, humanoid hands grip the bars from inside the cart.

This reinforced wagon serves the Hant as a place to hold prisoners.

Iron Cart Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock 40.

Creatures: A pair of Hant soldiers guards this cart at all times; one of them carries the key to the cart's door.

Locked in this metal-sided, wheeled cart are eight gnomes, survivors of the recent caravan raids. The Hant still haven't quite decided what to do with these gnomes. One of them managed to convince the orcs that they were worth more alive than on the dinner plate. This gnome is Milo Ostroff. He's convinced Grauss that he and his fellow surviving gnomes are nobles who were disguised as merchants, and that the orc can make a lot of money ransoming them back to their families. Grauss is considering the offer, but if the PCs take too long, he might get impatient and decide to eat them all.

Each of the gnomes is bound at the hands with standard manacles and at the feet with chains.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (2): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Gnome prisoner, gnome warrior 1 (7): hp 6 each (currently 1 each); *Monster Manual* 132.

Milo Ostroff, male gnome bard 8/cleric 2: CR 10; Small humanoid; HD 8d6 plus 2d8; hp 39 (currently 3); Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +7; Grp +2; Atk +10 melee (1d2–1, unarmed strike); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d2–1, unarmed strike); SA *fascinate*, spells, spell-like abilities, *suggestion*, turn undead 6/day; SQ countersong, bardic

knowledge, bardic music, inspire courage +2, inspire competence, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +11 (+13 against illusions); Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Appraise +12, Bluff +14, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +20, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen +4, Perform (comedy) +14, Profession (merchant) +15, Sense Motive +4.

Feats: Iron Will, Negotiator, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome.

Spell-Like Abilities (caster level 1): 1/day—*dancing lights, ghost sound, prestidigitation.*

Bard Spells Known (3/4/4/2; caster level 8): 0—*detect magic, know direction, light, mage hand, mending, read magic*; 1st—*charm person* (DC 15), *cure light wounds, hypnotism* (DC 15), *silent image* (DC 15); 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 16), *tongues*; 3rd—*charm monster* (DC 17), *cure serious wounds, glibness.*

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 2; Fharlanghn): 0—*create water, guidance, purify food and drink, resistance*; 1st—*command* (DC 14), *endure elements, longstrider*[D], *shield of faith.*

D: Domain Spell. Domains: Luck, Travel.

Possessions: None—his gear is currently held in Grauss' tent (area 8).

Development: If released, the gnomes plead for the PCs to free the rest of their pilgrimage caravan, who are working as slaves in the mess tent. Milo also warns the PCs that the orcs are up to something big. He's not sure what Grauss and Kabik's actual goal is here at the Serpent Mound, but they both seem to defer to King Bog in word and deed. Milo hasn't talked with the titanic toad, but he has seen the massive creature several times. If the PCs haven't done so already, he strongly suggests they investigate Grauss' tent (area 8) for clues for what the orcs are really up to. Whatever it is, it can't be good!

7. Armory (EL 16)

One of the few permanent structures in the coils of the Serpent Mound, this structure has rock walls and a thatched roof. The building has no windows, and a heavy wooden door, currently propped open, faces north. Inside, a searing hot forge blasts heat and light into the single room. Hanging on one wall are a dozen spherical molds. On the wall opposite are two piles of cloth and leather, heaped into a simple nest.

Creatures: This stone structure is the home and workshop of two gray slaadi who, at Iuz's request, have offered their services to King Bog One-eye and his army. Unlike the Hant orcs, the slaadi aren't yet convinced that Bog is indeed a divine creature. They do believe that the Hant have been tricked into believing he is a servant of Gruumsh; if anything, King Bog is a slaad demigod in disguise. Of course, all this duplicity has made them worry that they too are being tricked, but until proved otherwise they dare not challenge King Bog directly.

As a tithing to the possible slaad lord, the slaadi agreed to aid in creating the *Throne of Iuz*, viewing it as a prime opportunity to aid in spreading raw chaos to the Material Plane. The slaadi have finished creating the components for the *Throne*, and now spend their time building new weapons for the orc army while they wait for the *Throne*'s eventual activation.

The two gray slaadi are named Centomo and Lakovic. They spend much of their time in the form of orcs to fit in better at the camp. Only King Bog, General Grauss, and Lieutenant Kabik know that the weapon smiths are actually slaadi. If the alarm is raised, Centomo and Lakovic retreat to this room and assume their natural forms, reverting to orc form only when the intruders are repulsed. They also assume their true forms if attacked.

Centomo and Lakovic, male gray slaad sorcerer 5/dragon disciple 3: CR 14; Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar); HD 10d8+70 plus 5d4+35 plus 3d12+21; hp 203 each; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34, touch 16, flat-footed 30; Base Atk +14; Grp +22; Atk +20 melee (1d8+15/19–20, *+2 morningstar* with 5-point Power Attack); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+15/19–20, *+2 morningstar* with 5 point Power Attack) and +18 melee (2d4+8, claw with 5-point Power Attack) and +18 melee (2d8+4, bite with 5-point power attack); SA breath weapon, spells, spell-like abilities, summon slaad; SQ change shape, damage reduction 10/lawful, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5, summon familiar (no familiar currently summoned); AL CN; SV Fort +19, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 26, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 20.

Skills: Climb +21, Concentration +28, Craft (weaponsmith) +10, Hide +17, Jump +21, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Search +15, Spellcraft +25, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (morningstar), Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Languages: Common, Orc, Slaad.

Breath Weapon (Su): 30-foot cone, once per day, damage 2d8 cold, Reflex DC 20 half. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*chaos hammer* (DC 19), *deeper darkness, detect magic, identify, invisibility, lightning bolt* (DC 18), *magic circle against law, see invisibility, shatter* (DC 17); 3/day—*animate objects, dispel law* (DC 20), *fly*; 1/day—*power word stun.* Caster level 10th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/5, caster level 5th): 0—*acid splash* (+18 ranged touch), *dancing lights, mending, message, read magic, touch of fatigue* (+22 touch, DC 15); 1st—*burning hands* (DC 16), *magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+18 ranged touch), *shield*, 2nd—*blur, bull's strength, ghoul's touch* (DC 17), *mirror image.*

Possessions: *+2 chain shirt, +2 morningstar, ring of protection +2.*

Tactics: When they fight, the slaadi sacrifice 5 points from their attack rolls with Power Attack to gain additional damage. They typically start combat with breath weapons, ranged spells, and spell-like abilities, switching to melee only when their enemies do so first. They aren't particularly loyal to the Hant orcs, and won't come to their aid if the alarm is raised.

GENERAL GRAUSS

8. GRAUSS' TENT (EL 16)

White furs cover the roof and sides of this tent, making it stand out from the rest of the dingy camp. The short-haired skins seem to have come from a large animal of great beauty. Within, the tent is well organized and clean, although the decorations remain as grim and cruel as any orc's. Preserved elf, gnome, and human heads are mounted on the tent's supports, along with two unicorn heads and what looks like a set of dragon's teeth. A fur-lined hammock hangs from the far wall, and the center of the room is dominated by a large oak table, its surface pocked with dents and slashes.

Creature: This tent serves as General Grauss' residence and the tribe's war room. Grauss usually remains in his tent except when he's reviewing his troops, eating, or meeting with King Bog, the slaadi, or Lieutenant Kabik. If the camp is not on alert, there's a 75% of encountering the orc general here.

Grauss wears a skull-shaped mask and a platinum-colored breastplate with two matching bracelets. Underneath the breastplate, a fancy, embroidered tunic can be seen. A matching cape billows behind almost like a pair of folded bat wings. A gold medallion in the shape of a coiled snake hangs from his neck. Grauss is uncharacteristically charismatic for an orc, a trait that, combined with his formidable talent for skewering dissidents with his trident, makes him an ideal leader in a violent society.

General Grauss, male orc barbarian 8/fighter 8: CR 16; Medium humanoid; HD 8d12+32 plus 8d10+32; hp 165; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +16; Grp +22; Atk +21 melee (1d8+13/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident* wielded two-handed with 5 points of Power Attack) or +21 ranged (1d8+10/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident*); Full Atk +21/+16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+13/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident* wielded two-handed with 5 points of Power Attack) or +21 ranged (1d8+10/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident*); SA rage 3/day; SQ damage reduction 1/—, darkvision 60 ft., improved uncanny dodge, light sensitivity, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +19, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 22, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 7, Cha 18.

Skills: Climb +13, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +19, Jump +17, Listen +8, Ride +8, Survival +6.

Feats: Far Shot[B], Improved Critical (trident), Greater Weapon Focus (trident)[B], Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack[B], Precise Shot[B], Quick-draw, Weapon Focus (trident), Weapon Specialization (trident)[B].

Languages: Common, Orc.

Rage: hp 197; AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Grp +24; Atk +23 melee (1d8+16/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident* wielded two-handed with 5 points of Power Attack) or +21 ranged (1d8+12/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident*); Full Atk +23/+18/+13/+8 melee (1d8+16/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident* wielded two-handed with 5 points of Power Attack) or +21 ranged (1d8+12/19–20, *+1 orcblood returning thundering trident*); SV Fort +21, Will +9; Str 26, Con 22; Climb +15, Jump +19.

Possessions: *+2 mithral breastplate, +1 orcblood returning thundering trident, gauntlets of ogre power, ring of protection +2, cloak of resistance +2, mask of the skull*, two *potions of cure serious wounds*, potion of *fly*, *potion of barkskin +5*, fine embroidered tunic worth 200 gp, two platinum bracelets inset with black pearls worth 300 gp each, gold Serpent Mound medallion worth 50 gp, pouch of 72 pp.

Treasure: The furs draped on the outside of the tent belonged to the eight unicorns recently ambushed and killed by the Hant army. They are fairly well preserved, and could fetch 100 gp apiece. Likewise, the gold dragon teeth mounted inside are worth 500 gp to a collector, as long as they are sold as a set inside their frame.

Sitting on the chest is a silver urn worth 150 gp. Set near another wall is a large polished silver mirror worth 500 gp on a tripod stand. Stored underneath Grauss' cot (Search check DC 10 to find) is a painting of a elven family with a gilded gold frame worth a total of 1,500 gp. Eight unicorn horns (2,000 gp each to evil merchants) are tied in a bundle underneath a pile of dirty clothes and refuse (Search check DC 18). Centered on Grauss' table is a small marble statue with inlaid pearls (275 gp). While of little value, the PCs are sure to notice a necklace with dozens of humanoid ears or various races hanging on a tent post.

The chest itself is locked (Open Lock DC 35) and contains several bags of coins—2,300 gp and 160 pp in all. Additionally, the chest contains a large number of scrolls, parchments maps, and books. Looking through these documents and making sense of them requires a successful DC 20 Knowledge check (arcana, architecture

and engineering, geography, local, or nature) and 10 minutes of study. Success allows the character to realize that the orcs have apparently found a way to expand the radius of the Defiled Glades to corrupt and ruin the entire Vesve Forest. The documents make clear the fact that the orcs are likely only a few weeks from realizing their plan, and that it involves a powerful magic device hidden deep below the Serpent Mound in an area referred to "King Bog's Throne Room."

9. Chimera Stable (EL 13)

This long wooden shack has a barred double door every ten feet. The log structure is solidly built and obviously constructed to withstand a lot of punishment. From a few feet away, noises of chains clanking and growling can be heard from within.

Creatures: Each of these two stables houses the pride of the Hant army: a number of particularly large and cruel chimeras. The camp has a total of 12 chimeras. Each of these stables houses four, while the remaining four are out on patrol. The chimeras immediately attack anyone they don't recognize as orcs.

Advanced Chimeras (4): hp 141 each; see page 64.

10. Meeting Pavilion (EL 15)

This wood post pavilion has a sloped roof and is open on three of its sides. A solid wood wall faces north to protect the stage from the prevailing wind. A massive red eye is painted on both sides of the wall, watching over a large chest made of red-colored wood with an iron framework that sits beneath it.

This meeting pavilion is where the Hant muster for battle before raids or when called to defend the camp. They also relax in its shade in the daytime and use it for spillover seating from the mess tent. On holy days, it is even used as a makeshift church.

As a tribute to Gruumsh, orc clerics cast *desecrate* upon it three times a day. The spell lasts 10 hours each time it is cast. A DC 14 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the bloody eye symbol as that of Gruumsh.

Creatures: At any given time, 2d4 Hant soldiers and a Hant cleric linger at the pavilion. These soldiers are usually poorly prepared for attacks and suffer a –4 penalty on Initiative checks as a result. The cleric on duty here carries the key to the chest.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (2d4): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Hant cleric, orc cleric 9 (1): hp 62 each; see page 67.

Treasure: The fancy locked chest (Open Lock DC 40) is worth 500 gp on its own as a work of art. Inside are 22 divine scrolls—twelve scrolls of *desecrate*, six scrolls of *cure serious wounds*, and four scrolls of *diminish plants*. The chest also contains 80 sheets of blank parchment sheets and 20 bottles of ink.

11. Eyes of Quartz

A pair of massive blue geodes lies here, admirably serving as the Serpent Mound's glittering blue eyes.

As with the fire slabs in area **4**, the creators of the Serpent Mound infused both of these eyes with magical energies, but unlike the fire slabs, both of these continue to function to this day. Each eye radiates an *invisibility purge* (caster level 15) in a 50-foot-radius sphere; this effectively encapsulates the entire "head" of the Serpent Mound and some of the nearby huts.

Serpent Mound Eye: 40 tons; Hardness 8; hp 1,800; Break DC 45. The magic of the ancient elves that powers the *invisibility purge* is tied to the Serpent Mound itself, and fails if the geodes are taken elsewhere. Without their enchantment, the geodes are worth 500 gp each.

12. Serpent Mound Entrance (EL 16)

A set of stairs spills from the Serpent Mound's gaping maw. The stairs are carved of fine white marble and fork at the end, giving the impression of a snake's forked tongue. A large basin gurgles with the sound of water within the fork. Beyond, a fifteen-foot-wide tunnel slopes down into the earth.

Two of the features here are in fact wondrous architecture, as detailed in the *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook*. The large basin at the crook of the stairs is a *greater everful basin*. It operates as an *everful basin* except that it always contains 40 gallons of water, no matter how many times it might be dipped into. If tipped over, however, it ceases to work forever, the magic spilling away with the last of the water.

The steps leading into the Serpent Mound function as a *greater bier of inquisition*. They cast *speak with dead* (caster level 15) on any corpse lain upon them. The effect persists for 15 minutes, and in this time the corpse can be asked up to seven questions. If the corpse's alignment differs from that of the person asking the question, the corpse gets a DC 14 Will save to resist. After the effect expires, the steps won't work on that same corpse for a full week, nor will a standard *speak with dead* spell.

A *legend lore* spell or a DC 30 Knowledge (history) or bardic knowledge check reveals that the mound's creators used the steps of the basin tongue to quiz dead bodies about their former life, including whether their deaths were honorable or not.

Creatures: As this is the entrance to King Bog's realm, he demands ample guards here at all times. A pair of Hant captains, three Hant clerics, and two vrock demons stand at the entrance to the Serpent Mound. They defend the stairs with their lives, and never leave their post unless other guards relieve them. Only King Bog One-eye, Lieutenant Kabik, General Grauss, Centomo (in orc form) and Lakovic (in orc form) are permitted to enter the Serpent Mound tunnel.

King Bog, his bodyguards, and the Hant army are unaware of the special properties of the basin tongue steps. However, they use the *greater everful basin* daily.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (6): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Hant cleric, orc cleric 9 (1): hp 62 each; see page 67.

Vrock demons (2): hp 115 each; *Monster Manual* 48.

13. Mess Tent (EL 14)

This large stain-spattered tent is in decrepit condition. The fabric is torn and a few tent posts seem to be held up by sheer will. Inside, four long tables are spaced evenly along the tent's length. Next to three of them sit sets of long benches. The fourth is loaded down with a variety of unappetizing food. At the center of the mess hall a roaring fire vents smoke into an opening at the tent's apex.

Creatures: The mess tent is usually abuzz with activity day and night. Even late at night, orc soldiers often stop in for a "midnight" snack. The workers here consist of five captured gnomes bullied by three Hant soldiers. In addition, 2d4–2 Hant soldiers can typically be found here, eating and helping to abuse the gnome prisoners.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (3 plus 2d4–2): hp 77 each; see page 63.

Gnome prisoner, gnome warrior 1 (7): hp 6 each (currently 1 each); *Monster Manual* 132.

Development: If released, the gnomes plead for the PCs to free the rest of their captured caravan, who are locked in the jail near Grauss' tent (area **6**).

14. Cooking Pit

An iron framework sits atop a large bonfire. Hanging from the ironwork are a variety of pots that are cooking the meats, herbs, and plants used to feed the orcs at the camp.

A search of the cooking pit turns up a large number of bones, many of them humanoid, but nothing of any real value.

15. Trash Heap

This pile of refuse reeks with the cloying stink of rotten vegetables, spoiled meat, freshly hatched maggots, and sun-baked offal. Like candles on a cake, a half dozen mushrooms, each the size of a man, sprout up from various places around the trash heap.

Orcs often wile away the hours taking "pot-shots" with their *+1 returning shotputs* at rats and other scavengers that haunt this heap. The mushrooms are a rare strain of Medium fungi; they may look dangerous, but are in fact harmless. They are used by Lieutenant Kabik and King Bog One-eye to *transport via plants* to and from the Serpent Mound cathedral, where similar mushrooms grow.

16. Stables (EL 9)

This high-roofed tent, once a vivid red but now bleached to a dirty pink from sun exposure, is connected to fencing just to the south.

Creature: This stable is used to store grain, horse saddles, and other supplies for the Hant between raids. Approximately 200 days of feed are stored here. A lone Hant soldier guards the area to keep the feed safe from rodents.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5 (2): hp 77 each; see page 63.

17. Corral

A five-foot-high wooden fence encloses this section of field. Inside, several surly and tired-looking horses grunt fitfully and move about uncharacteristically slowly. The ground inside is a greasy slick of mud. At the center of the corral sit four troughs, each buzzing with clouds of insects.

Creatures: The corral is home to 15 light war horses used on raids by the Hant. They are also sometimes used to transport goods back and forth from the Hant stronghold in the Defiled Glades. In general, the horses are poorly cared for by their orc handlers. As such, they have fewer hit points than an average war horse. Horses that can no longer work are butchered and fed to the chimeras.

Light Warhorses (15): hp 17; *Monster Manual* 274.

18. Livestock Yard (EL 9)

A surprising array of animals are fenced in here. Several pigs and a mule share the area with pen full of chickens. The muddy ground squishes as the animals roam listlessly about the area.

This area is used to keep livestock before it is slaughtered. The orcs sometimes throw one or two gnome prisoners into this pen to watch them dodge the hungry pigs. Sometimes the orcs rescue the gnome and put him back to work in the mess hall, and sometimes they don't.

Creature: One bored Hant soldier guards the area to keep his fellow soldiers from stealing the livestock.

Hant soldier, orc barbarian 4/fighter 5: hp 77 each; see page 63.

19. Giant's Workshop (EL 15)

This tall tent has windows of netting on each side, and a roof flap where a tin smokestack pokes through. The smoke rising from the chimney is thin, wispy, and only barely visible.

Creatures: This tent is the home of three female stone giant monks who have been working for King Bog to craft the *Throne of Iuz*. While their part of building the *Throne* is complete, they have stayed on to do additional jewelry and furniture work until such a time as they can serve as bearers for the *Throne of Iuz*. These stone giants were all members of a clan of monastic giants that lived deep in the Clatspurs to the northwest, but they were exiled from their monastery after they were caught making bread out of a cage full of halflings. They hooked up with the Hant several years ago, and have served as the primary crafters for the tribe ever since. Although they've turned their backs on their religious pasts, they retain the skills they learned and are dangerous combatants.

Female stone giant monk 4 (3): CR 12; Large giant (earth); HD 18d8+108; hp 189; Init +5; Spd 50 ft.; AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +13; Grp +26; Atk +22 melee (2d6+9/19–20, unarmed strike) or +17 ranged (2d8+13, rock); Full Atk +20/+20/+15/+10 melee (2d6+9/19–20, unarmed strike) or +17 ranged (2d8+13, rock); SA flurry of blows, rock throwing; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, *Ki* strike (magic), low-light vision, rock catching, slow fall 20 ft., still mind; AL LE; SV Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +12; Str 28, Dex 20, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +20, Craft (sculpture) +8, Jump +30, Spot +14, Tumble +13.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Stunning Fist (7/day, DC 21), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Languages: Giant, Orc.

Possessions: *Necklace of fireballs* (type V), *ring of protection +1*.

Chapter Two: Into the Serpent Mound

Underneath the Serpent Mound a spiraling tunnel eventually leads to a grand subterranean cathedral where King Bog One-eye has made his home.

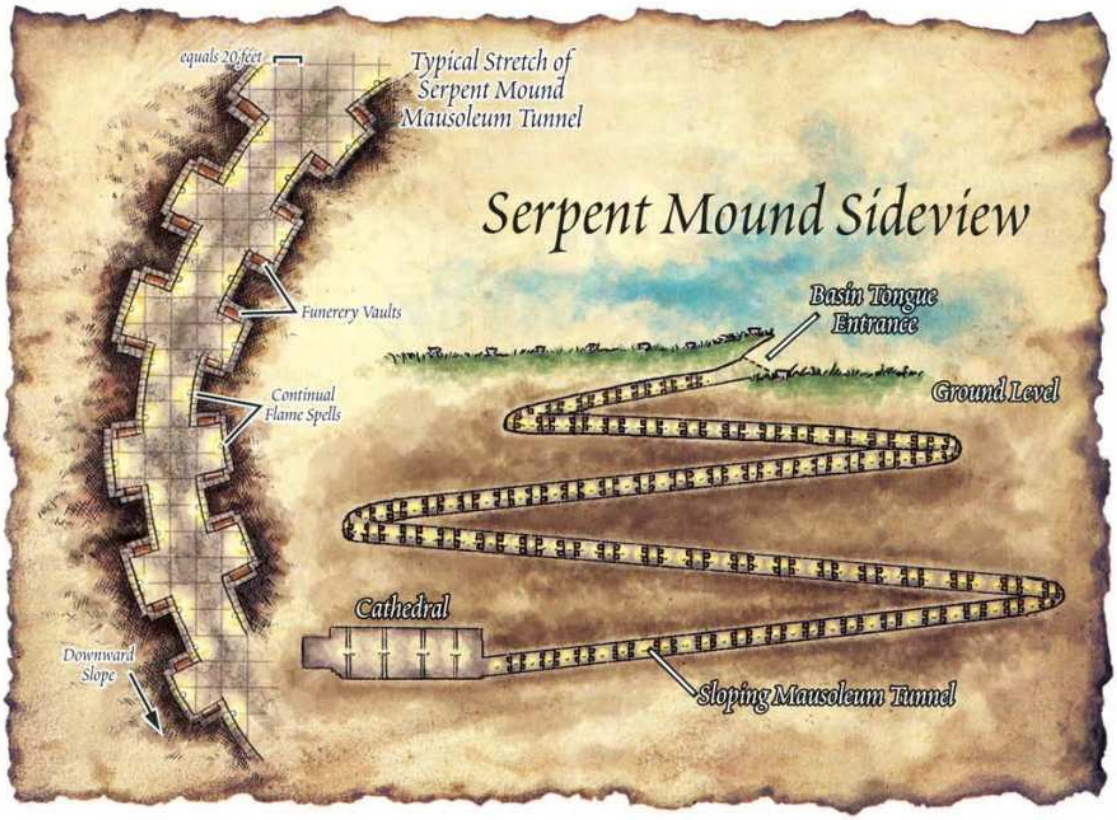
The worked-stone tunnel descends at a constant eight degree angle until it reaches the cathedral. The tunnel ceiling remains an even 20 feet high, and every 40 feet, specially designed U-shaped stone arches support the tunnel in a manner similar to an actual snake's vertebrae. Each of these arches is wider than the rest of the tunnel, so they form regular alcoves along the left and right walls. The entire length of the tunnel is lit by *continual flames* cast upon the keystone of each of these arches.

The walls between these supports are carved with brilliant artistry to illustrate aspects of elf society. Among other things, the murals show birthing ceremonies, festivals, food preparation, nature rituals, sword-making methods, and military-training drills. Above each mural are carved elven sayings along the lines of: "Piety brings trust. Trust brings respect. Respect brings honor. Honor brings glory. Glory brings grace."

Although the tunnel provides access to both King Bog and his secret project, the Hant orcs have been ordered to stay out of the underground portion of the Serpent Mound, and they fear their leaders too much to pursue anyone into its depths.

Burial Niches

Each of the alcoves created by the "vertebrae" arches in the tunnel contains two burial niches. For the first few hundred feet, these niches are empty; the ancient elves were forced to flee the region before they had a chance to fill the mound with their honored dead. After this initial distance, the niches become occupied. The remains are little more than bones and dust wrapped in tight linen death



shrouds. A single name is carved above each niche, indicating who rests within. All of the remains have been recently (and unceremoniously) pulled from their niches and lie in tangled heaps on the floor. This is the handiwork of Grauss and Kabik, who looted the bodies of their burial treasures not long after they moved into the area. If the PCs are searching for Aelinar's ancestral weapon, they'll be able to find Althinan Lurialian's burial niche near the middle of the trek down to the cathedral. Alas, it has been looted as well. Fortunately, the sword is still in the area; King Bog took a liking to it and now keeps it in his lair as a trophy.

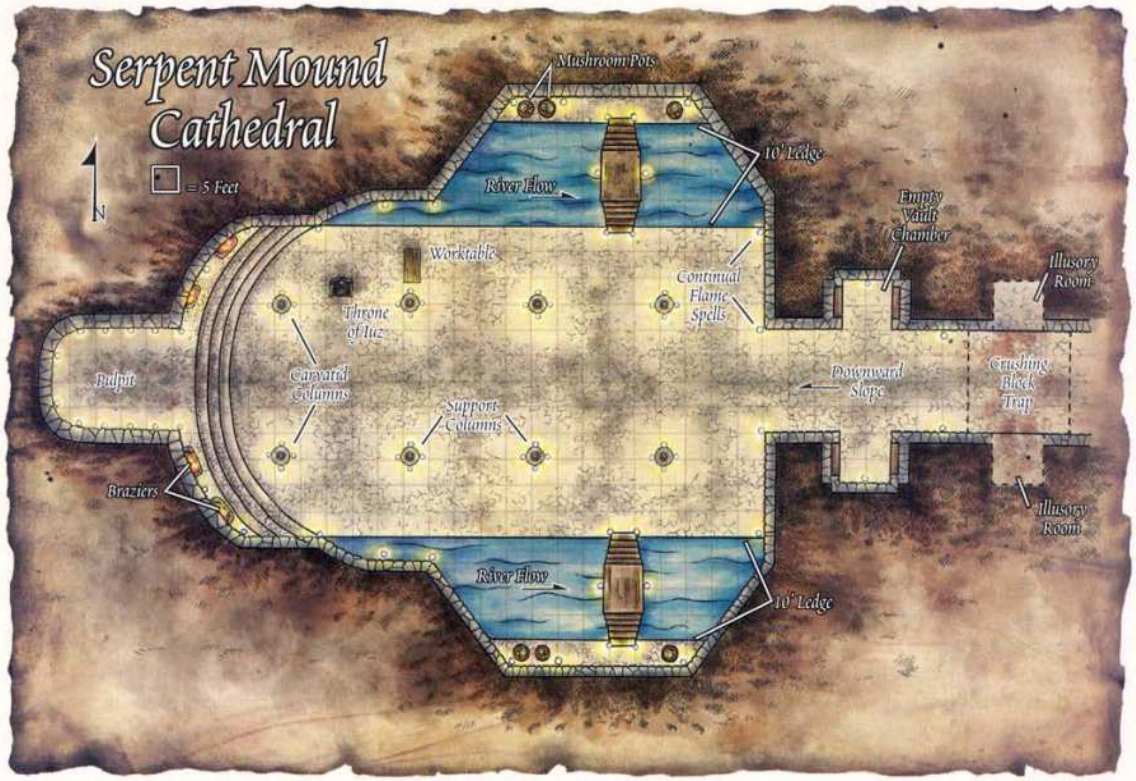
The Serpent Mound tunnel winds down into the earth for several hundred feet before straightening out for the last 200 feet, finally opening into King Bog's lair.

THE CATHEDRAL (EL 18)

Remember that before the PCs actually get to this room, they'll probably need to deal with the Trap. When they manage to enter the place, read them the following description.

This massive room yawns more than a hundred feet in length and ends in an upraised pulpit flanked by sputtering braziers. The sound of surging water fills the room, issuing from twin canals of swiftly flowing water. The canals are built into antechambers to the left and right, beyond which loom numerous man-sized mushrooms and other fungi. Access to both mushroom-lined banks is granted by two five-foot-wide stone bridges. A series of eight columns, each ringed by flickering torches, stands in the center. A large worktable sits at the far end of the room, near the pulpit, and between them looms an impressive throne, its back rising up to loom over the seat in the shape of a massive skull. This stunningly beautiful oversized throne has a sturdy cedar framework gilded with platinum. Along the massive skull-shaped headboard are carvings of bat-winged demons flying upward. A lush velvet cushion embroidered with images of skulls and fixed to the throne with pearl buttons pads the seating area. The entire throne is pocked with hundreds of gems set in decorative spiraling patterns.

While the Serpent Mound above may be the most visible show of architectural and magical wonder that remains from the now-vanished tribe of elves, this cathedral in many ways surpasses even that feat. Its architectural triumphs are subtle, but impressive. The two canals are in fact a single underground river that was rerouted and incorporated into the construction. This river empties into a massive underground lake about 700 feet downriver. In addition, the ceiling is supported not by the columns (which are mostly for show), but by the chamber's walls. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (architecture) check reveals the true wonders of the room's



construction, and it should make the viewer question again the skills of these ancient elves who weren't known for their monument building.

Additionally, the cathedral holds two potent magical qualities. The chamber is filled not only with a constant *invisibility purge* effect, but also with a *mind blank* effect that protects all creatures within the room. No one in the chamber can be affected by devices and spells that influence or read emotions and thoughts, up to and including *miracle* and *wish*. These effects function at caster level 20, and if successfully dispelled are only suppressed for 1d4 rounds before they return in full force.

The throne is the nearly completed *Throne of Iuz*, a minor artifact that King Bog intends to use to extend the boundaries of the Defiled Glades.

Creatures: When King Bog first discovered this room, he knew it was the perfect place to live in while he constructed the *Throne of Iuz*. When the two caryatid columns animated and killed two Hant captains that had accompanied him and severely wounded General Grauss before he managed to escape, King Bog was even more impressed; it was clear that these two advanced caryatid columns were programmed to defend the room from invasions by humanoids. After some research, Kabik and King Bog determined that humanoids who wore medallions shaped in the likeness of the Serpent Mound were ignored by the constructs. He had two such medallions fashioned—one for Grauss and one for Kabik. No other orcs are permitted in King Bog's throne room.

The exact nature of the opposition the party faces in this chamber depends on their actions in the Hant camp above. If they've managed to make it this far without alerting the camp, they'll face only King Bog, Kabik, the druid's animal companion, and the two caryatid columns. If, on the other hand, they reach this chamber only after several prolonged attacks on the camp, they may have to deal with the two slaadi dragon disciples, the two vrocks, and General Grauss himself.

Kabik's hair hangs down in thick dreadlocks. He carries a quarterstaff that has been carved to look as if its been covered with a hundreds of fat, hairy spiders. On his chest he wears a gold medallion that shows a coiled snake. His animal companion is a cruel-tempered dire boar named Blister.

King Bog is truly massive—20 feet wide and just as long. He has but one eye, and its movement shows clear intelligence. The sweaty toad makes a thunderous, low moaning noise with every move it makes, as if the very act of locomotion is painful, yet he can move with surprising and sudden action if needed. During his early years of intelligence, he explored much of the Vesve and the surrounding regions, and quickly learned he had developed a knack for utilizing these terrains to increase his already impressive prowess.

King Bog One-eye, titanic awakened male toad horizon walker 4: CR 16; Gargantuan magical beast; HD 31d8+279; hp 418; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 29, touch 6, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +22; Grp +47; Atk or Full Atk +31 melee (4d8+19, bite); Space/Reach 20 ft./20 ft.; SA trample 3d8+19 (Reflex DC 35); SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, terrain mastery (forest, hills, plains, underground); AL NE; SV Fort +29, Ref +15, Will +17; Str 37, Dex 10, Con 28, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 7; *Monster Manual II* 218.

Skills: Hide +26, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (geography) +11, Listen +40, Spot +40, Swim +30.

Feats: Awesome Blow, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor (3), Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Snatch.

Languages: Orc, Abyssal, Giant, Aquan.

Possessions: *Ring of major fire resistance, ring of spell storing (teleport), armband of minor displacement* (as cloak of the same name; resizes to fit any size arm), *clear spindle ioun stone, pale lavender ioun stone* (20 levels remain).

Note: While King Bog One-eye doesn't need to eat or drink thanks to his *ioun stone*, he still enjoys eating, and is in fact quite a glutton, especially when offered exotic or unique foods.

Lieutenant Kabik, male orc druid 15: CR 15; Medium humanoid; HD 15d8+30; hp 101; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +11; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (1d6+5, *+1 orcblood quarterstaff* wielded two-handed); Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+5, *+1 orcblood quarterstaff* wielded two-handed); SA spells, wildshape 5/day (Tiny to Huge animal or plant); SQ a thousand faces, darkvision 60, light sensitivity, nature sense, resist nature's lure, timeless body, trackless step, venom immunity, wild empathy +17, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +20, Handle Animal +10, Knowledge (nature) +20, Listen +19, Ride +10, Spot +15, Survival +22 (+24 in natural areas aboveground).

Feats: Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Fast Wild Shape*, Natural Spell, Quicken Spell.

*This feat is from *Complete Divine*; it allows Kabik to use wild shape as a move-equivalent action.

Languages: Druidic, Orc, Sylvan.

Druid Spells Prepared (caster level 15): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance* (2), *read magic, resistance*; 1st—*charm animal* (DC 16), *cure light wounds* (2), *entangle* (DC 16), *longstrider, produce flame* (+13 touch or +12 ranged touch), *shillelagh*; 2nd—*barkskin, cat's grace, heat metal* (DC 17), *resist energy* (2), *tree shape*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *poison* (DC 18), *quench* (DC 18), *spike growth* (DC 18), *wind wall*; 4th—*air walk, cure serious wounds, flame strike* (DC 19), *freedom of movement, scrying* (DC 19); 5th—*animal growth, call lightning storm* (DC 20), *cure critical wounds, death ward, stoneskin*; 6th—quickened *barkskin*, quickened *bear's endurance, transport via plants*; 7th—quickened *greater magic fang, true seeing*; 8th—*finger of death* (DC 22).

Note: When Kabik wildshapes, his *periapt of Wisdom +4* is absorbed into his body. As a result, his Wisdom score drops to 16 and he temporarily loses the ability to cast his 7th- and 8th-level spells. He also loses a bonus 1st-level, 4th-level, and 5th-level spell; he makes sure to cast three spells of these levels before wild shaping as a result if he hasn't already (he usually casts *longstrider, freedom of movement*, and *call lightning storm*).

Possessions: *+1 wild leather armor, +2 orcblood quarterstaff* (stores a *heal* spell, courtesy of a previously cast *spellstaff*), *periapt of Wisdom +4, eyes of the eagle, ring of minor acid resistance, ring of protection +1, wand of bull's strength* (23 charges), *wand of cure serious wounds* (36 charges), twelve gold stud earrings worth 20 gp each, gold medallion featuring the Serpent Mound worth 50 gp, 5 pouches of diamond dust worth 50 gp each for *stoneskin* spells, three doses of *true seeing* ointment worth 250 gp each, 54 gp.

Lieutenant Kabik (red sundew form): Huge plant; HD 15d8+30; hp 101; Init –1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 7, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +28; Atk +18 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 acid, slam); Full Atk +18 melee (2d6+9 plus 1d6 acid, 4 slams); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA improved grab, spells, sticky acid, wildshape 5/day (Tiny to Huge animal or plant); SQ nature sense, plant traits, resist nature's lure, timeless body, trackless step, wild empathy +17, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +4, Will +14; Str 29, Dex 8, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10; *Monster Manual II* 179.

Skills: Concentration +23, Handle Animal +10, Knowledge (nature) +20, Listen +19, Ride +9, Spot +15, Survival +22 (+24 in natural areas aboveground).

Improved Grab (Ex): If Kabik hits an opponent that is at least Large or smaller with his slam attack, he can start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Sticky Acid (Ex): Any creature that makes physical contact with Kabik while he is in red sundew form is smeared with the sticky acid that coats his body, which deals 1d6 points of acid damage per round until removed. This acid damage (including acid damage from a successful slam attack) continues to damage the creature for 1d4+1 rounds. It cannot be scraped off, but can be washed off with a full-round action and at least 1 gallon of water. Note that when Kabik assumes this form with wildshape, he does not gain the red sundew's immunity to acid (since this is an extraordinary special quality). He always casts *resist energy (acid)* on himself before assuming this form as a result.

Blister, male dire boar animal companion: CR —; Large animal; HD 13d8+39; hp 97; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +9; Grp +23; Atk +18 melee (2d6+15, gore); Full Atk +18/+13 melee (2d6+15, gore); SA ferocity; SQ devotion, evasion, link, multiattack, low-light vision, scent, share spells; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 30, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8; *Monster Manual* 63.

Skills: Listen +11, Spot +11.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Improved Natural Attack (gore), Iron Will, Power Attack.

Advanced Caryatid Columns (2): CR 11; Large construct; HD 21d10+30; hp 145; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +15; Grp +28; Atk +20 melee (1d10+27/19–20, *+2 bastard sword* wielded two-handed with 6 points in Power Attack); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+17/19–20, *+2 bastard sword* with 6 points in Power Attack) and +17 melee (1d6+10, slam with 6 points in Power Attack); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA —; SQ break weapon, column form, construct traits, hardness 8, magic weapon; AL N; SV For +6, Ref +8, Will +1; Str 28, Dex 14, Con —, Int 6, Wis 1, Cha 1; *Fiend Folio* 30.

Skills: Diplomacy –3, Sense Motive +19.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword)[B], Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)[B].

Break Weapon (Su): Whenever a creature strikes a caryatid column with a weapon, the weapon's user must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or the weapon breaks and become useless, dealing no damage to the caryatid column. Nonmagic ranged weapons automatically shatter upon hitting a caryatid column, dealing no damage.

Column Form (Ex): When in column form, the caryatid column appears as a normal column. It does not radiate magic and true seeing does not reveal its humanoid form. Careful examination of the column (Search check DC 25) reveals very faint and distorted lines that make the pillar resemble a woman with a sword. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 12) notes that the column serves no purpose since it bears none of the ceiling's weight. A close examination of the top of the column (Search check DC 15) or a keen eye (Spot check DC 20) shows that the column is not attached to the ceiling. Creatures with stonecunning receive a free Search check as though actively looking when they pass within 10 feet of a caryatid column. Changing forms is a free action, and a caryatid column can change once per round.

Magic Weapon: The caryatid column's *+2 bastard sword* becomes a nonmagic stone sculpture whenever out of its hands. It can stow the weapon by pressing it against its side; the weapon then merges with the caryatid column's body and can be retrieved later as any character would draw a weapon.

Tactics: King Bog spends most of his time resting within the confines of the pulpit where the relatively tight space provides him with protection from being flanked. Before he attacks, he usually waits for his allies to "test" the combatants, even if he's previously encountered them in the camp above. He uses the first few rounds of combat to observe the enemy and gauge their strengths and weaknesses, attacking before then only if Kabik is defeated or he is attacked himself.

Kabik prefers to fight in the form of a huge carnivorous plant called a red sundew. In this form, he appears as a heaving mound of plant matter with four acid-dripping tentacles. Before wild shaping into this form, Kabik casts as many of his defensive spells as he can on himself or on King Bog. He orders his animal companion Blister to guard the *Throne of Iuz*; Blister attacks any foe that approaches within 15 feet of it.

The caryatid columns ignore any humanoids who openly wear a Serpent Mound amulet—likewise, they ignore any non-humanoids. They activate immediately as soon as a non-warded humanoid comes within 60 feet, changing form as a free action and charging with their swords. They fight with their swords two-handed when making a single attack, but fight with them one-handed when they make full attacks so they can get an additional slam attack with their empty hand.

Any other creatures in the room (slaadi, vrock demons, or Grauss) generally fight to defend King Bog as best they can. No combatant flees until King Bog flees. If brought below 60 hit points, King Bog tries to flee, either by using his *ring of spell storing* to *teleport* away or by leaping into the underground river and swimming for the distant underground lake so he can escape into the Underdark.

Trap: The hallway just before the entrance to the cathedral is protected by a dangerous trap—a large block of stone that drops and crushes anyone who passes under it. *Permanent images* (caster level 16) of side rooms offer false hope for those who would try to dive aside to escape the trap; these illusions cause those who try to save against the trap's effects to do so at a –4 penalty if they are believed. The trap can be bypassed with a hidden switch just inside the cathedral.

Crushing Block Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; ceiling block drops (12d6, crush, DC 20 Reflex avoids); multiple targets (all targets in 20-ft. by 20-ft. area); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Treasure: On Kabik's worktable sits a large collection of alchemical powders, the equivalent of a fully-stocked masterwork alchemist's laboratory worth 500 gp. Stored underneath the worktable are four Large masterwork quarterstaffs (both ends are masterwork), a masterwork cudgel, a copper pitcher worth 20 gp, and a bed roll. Kabik eventually plans to enhance the quarterstaffs for the stone giants to use as carrying poles for the *Throne of Iuz*.

Althinan Lurialian's sword is kept here as well; King Bog took a liking to the exquisite weapon and decided to keep it rather than use it to help finance the *Throne's* construction. This *+2 dancing bastard sword* lies unceremoniously near King Bog's side in the pulpit area.

The *Throne of Iuz* is quite valuable; its components are worth a total of 10,500 gp. It is still nonmagic, but a successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) is enough for someone to note that it is in the process of being crafted into a powerful magic item. The *Throne*, meant to seat a Large humanoid, weighs 1,500 lbs. If completed, the *Throne of Iuz* would radiate constant *diminish plants*, *blight*, and *unhallow* effects out to a 1-mile radius. Vegetation ruined by the *Throne* cannot be healed as long as the *Throne* exists. The finished *Throne* may have other powers as well, as you see fit.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After the final battle, the PCs can choose to dismantle, destroy, or carry off the *Throne of Iuz*. Leaving the throne behind is a bad idea, as Iuz soon discovers what happened to his toad prodigy and comes to recover the *Throne*, turning it over to his favored high-level spellcasters for completion. Likewise, if the PCs sell the *Throne*, agents of Iuz eventually get their hands on it (they may in fact be those the PCs end up selling it to!). If the PCs destroy or dismantle the *Throne*, Iuz takes note and is displeased, but he has other matters at hand and takes no immediate actions against the PCs. The destruction of the Vesve is one of his long-term goals—he figures he can wait a few more years to see the woodland fed to the worms.

If the PCs fail to destroy or dismantle the *Throne*, Iuz's agents (either King Bog and his minions, the spellcasters, or some other group) finish the minor artifact in a few months. Once the throne is operational, it is carried through the Vesve Forest, expanding the taint of the Defiled Glades like a massive, writhing snail-trail, leaving nothing but corruption and monstrous terrain in its wake. Tracking down and destroying the *Throne of Iuz* at this point is quite difficult, as the artifact itself should be quite resistant to damage—to say nothing about its host of defenders!

If the PCs liberate the Serpent Mound and drive off the orcs, the elves of the Vesve eventually hear word and send some of their forces to reclaim the burial ground. If they discover the PCs are responsible for its recovery, an elven agent seeks them out with gifts of *+3 elven chainmail* or something similar as a token of gratitude for their service.

John Simcoe visited the real Serpent Mound, a quarter-mile-long Native American effigy in Adams County, Ohio, to research this adventure. Find out more about the Serpent Mound by visiting http://www.ohiohistory.org/places/serpent. Unfortunately, there's no place to find out more about really big and really mean toads, so John just had to wing that part.

New Weapon Quality

Orcblood: An *orcblood* weapon seems far more crude and rough in appearance than a regular weapon of its type, yet it is no less effective in battle. In the hands of an orc or any creature with the orc blood quality, an *orcblood* weapon's enhancement bonus increases by +1, and the wielder gains a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be an orc or have the orc blood quality; Price +1 bonus.

Adapting the Adventure

Although "Tyrant of the Trail" takes place in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK campaign setting, it can be easily adapted to other campaigns by simply changing a few names. For example, the Vesve Forest could become the High Forest in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and Iuz could be replaced by a half-fiend hierophant orc druid of Malar who awakened King Bog after finding him in a strangely warped section of the forest.

Scaling the Adventure

"Throne of Iuz" is designed for a group of four 15th–level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 13th–14th-level characters or 16th–20th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 15. Lower-level parties need more opportunities to retreat and rest from assaults on the orcs, but you can impose strict time limits on higher-level parties to increase the difficulty as well. You might require a truly high-level party to finish dealing with the orcs on their initial visit—if they retreat, Kabik and the others complete the creation of the *Throne of Iuz* and things rapidly grow out of control as a result.

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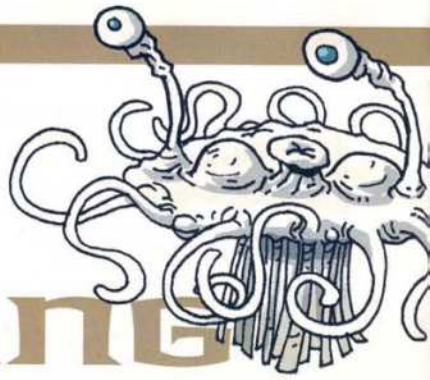


MASTERING THE GAME

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN, PART 5

BY MONTE COOK
ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE HUNTER

There are many ways to run a game. Every DM has his or her own unique style. However, at their root, all (good) styles can be categorized into two groups: the referee style and the guide style. It's important for DMs to understand the difference. It's also important for DMs to make it clear to their players what style they are using and to keep to it. Knowing which of these two styles is the basis for an individual DM's approach lies at the very core of the communication necessary for the game to work. The players must understand how you're going to run your game so they can act appropriately. The DM's style, in this sense, is the very foundation of how the game session proceeds.

THE REFEREE DM

When roleplaying games started, they grew out of tabletop miniatures wargaming. In these games, two or more players, each taking a side, pitted historical and eventually fantastic armies against one another. Specifically, they grew out of a tradition of complex wargaming scenarios that required a third player be on hand to adjudicate rulings and generally administer the rules. Sometimes, in the middle of a scenario, this referee or judge would spring a surprise on both players with some event. Often, the victor of a scenario would advance into another scenario, with his commander's skills improving as he became a veteran in the campaign. (It's not hard to see how roleplaying developed out of these ideas, really.)

All of this evolved into players running just one character (rather than an entire army) with a judge or referee adjudicating what happened in the dungeon (rather than the battlefield). It's important to understand, however, what the judge in these sessions did. He designed the dungeon and the monsters ahead of time, but once the game started he was simply the facilitator of the game—an impartial party, not unlike the computer in a computer roleplaying game, although arbitrating and administering things in a way that even today's computer games still can't quite accomplish.

This is why the farther back one goes in the archives of *DRAGON* magazine, or through the history of adventure modules and rulebooks, the more systemic material you'll find to aid in this arbitration: wandering monster encounter charts, random weather tables, and charts and rules dictating the actions of monsters and NPCs, to name just a few. In this older paradigm, the DM was asked to make as few choices as possible to help keep any inadvertent biases at bay (or simply to help those DMs who couldn't or didn't want to make such choices on their own).

The referee style of DMing, then, is the original style of DMing. It is "old school," so to speak. The idea here is that the DM creates the world (which might only be a town, a dungeon, and the wilderness in between, but it's still the world in the eyes of the players), but once he is done creating, the players must make their way in it as it stands. There isn't an overarching sense of drama or story that propels the action, but rather an attempt at simulation of realistic interaction with one's environment. The DM is an Aristotelian "prime mover," who puts everything in motion but is separate from it all. He or she simply moderates the use of the rules and controls the NPC actions. As an analogy, one could visualize a Rube Goldberg device, carefully crafted, but once started, unable to be influenced by its creator. What happens, happens. The presence of the PCs (or their identities, including level, race, equipment and other factors) does not modify the world—they must contend with whatever is there. Thus, if the PCs are 4th level and they wander into an encounter with a CR 15 dragon, so be it. If the DM set up a werewolf encounter and the PCs left their silver weapons behind, so be it. The encounter doesn't

change based on the PCs (There is no Heisenberg Uncertainty Principal here. Schrödinger's cat, in old-school D&D, is dead even before you open the box.)

The referee-style DM would find the idea of a dungeon where the inhabitants changed in order to fit the level of the party very strange. If the goal of a particular encounter involved convincing the town mayor of something, he would want rules for exactly how to determine if the mayor was convinced. He wouldn't want to be left to his own (biased) devices.

To this kind of DM, the rules are sacrosanct. To bend, fudge, or ignore a rule is to become less impartial. The rules are the underpinning of the game, the very rules of reality—without them, there is no game. More rules, particularly subsystems covering new situations, are good.

Should you be a referee-style DM? It has advantages. When the PCs overcome a tough challenge, there's a real sense of accomplishment, because they know that you didn't fudge things to help or tailor it specifically for them. Likewise, if something bad happens in the game, you can hold up your hands and proclaim your impartial status to hold yourself blameless.

In many ways, being a referee-style DM is easier than not. There's less responsibility and less thinking on your feet. Your creativity is the focus beforehand (as you prepare the scenario and the settings) but when the game starts, you go into a different mode of being an administrator and facilitator and, well, a referee. You answer rules questions, decide how to adjudicate player actions, and describe for the players what they see and what the NPCs do. That's it.

The real test is this—if you're DMing, would you be willing to make all your die rolls out in the open? Would you allow your little brother to run all your NPCs and monsters and control their actions while all you do is handle the rules? If so, then you really are impartial. The referee style is for you.

There's a kind of pride that goes along with being a referee-style DM. You say to the players, "This is my world (or dungeon, or adventure, or whatever), good luck—you're on your own." And then the gloves are off. The players understand what they are up against, and there's a feeling of verisimilitude in that—just like in the real world—their actions have consequences, and if they do something foolish, something bad might happen to their character. You aren't holding their hands, leading them by the nose, or coddling them in any way.

There are, of course, drawbacks. First of all, the temptation to aid the players "behind the screen" can be a strong one. But just as bad, there's a temptation to work against the players as well—to fudge the dice or stack things against the PCs to show just how "tough" a DM you are. To put it another way, impartiality is hard.

The other major drawback is that without your guiding hand, the game can go astray or—even worse—it can go nowhere. Some players need a guiding hand to show them what to do, or they need a DM to "wing" an event that enables things to keep moving or to go more smoothly. If the PCs are stuck in the middle of a mystery in town, the fortunate appearance of an NPC with just the right clue would make everything better, but if that encounter is not what the DM prepared ahead of time (probably as a time-based event or a random encounter), the DM's not really being impartial—he's helping the PCs.

THE GUIDE DM

In the history of the game, it wasn't until much later that, as people described what roleplaying games were to their non-gamer friends and family, they began to use the "running a game is like telling a story, with the players all being the main characters" analogy. As this concept grew, the analogy became more and more apt. DMs running games looked upon them as stories. Events transpired in the game because of their drama. Die rolls behind the screen were fudged to enhance the flow of the game, or to ensure that the PCs didn't die at an inappropriate moment.

DMs didn't want to be just an arbiter, but a part of the story—an architect of the ongoing action. They wanted to guide the game, not just let the dice and the rules guide it. If the DM had a cool idea for an encounter, but the PCs didn't go through that particular door, he switched it so that the encounter happened behind the door they did go through. If he rolled max damage for the falling block trap that came crashing down on the PCs through no real fault of their own, he lowered the damage amount because if the PCs were all dead, the story came to an unsatisfying end and the game was over (and the point of the game was to have fun and keep playing).

This doesn't mean that a guide-style DM is soft on the players. On the contrary, when a guide-style DM's main villain gets a beating by the players, the guide-style DM might fudge the rules to help the villain get away or get in a few good licks on the players, because it's less dramatic and anti-climactic to have the final challenge be simple.

Some DMs take the style to its inevitable conclusion, and don't even bother to prepare much ahead of time, guiding the game as it goes, flying by the seat of their pants, as it were. They react, rather than prepare, knowing that the needs of the game must follow the PCs' actions, rather than anticipate them. The guide's creativity comes to the fore not in the preparation, but during the game itself.

Guide-style DMs don't really design a world, they design a storyline. Rather than try to get around successfully in a world, the players try to fit into the story. The DM is an active participant, not a dispassionate arbiter.

The guide-style DM probably wouldn't use random monster tables, except perhaps as an idea generator for interesting and appropriate encounters. He doesn't need a subsystem for determining when an NPC is going to lose morale in a fight—he roleplays the part of the NPC and makes the decision on his own (or he makes the choice based on what's good for the drama of the situation).

The rules, in this style of play, are important only in the framework they provide. The rules of the game are the media in which the story is told. Too many rules and subsystems can bog down the story. Pacing is more important than rules

accuracy or even balance, although balance is still important.

If the PCs are badly hurt when they enter an encounter area, the guide-style DM might reduce the number of opponents they face. On the other hand, if they manage to come up with a way to get through a few tough encounters unscathed, the guide DM might make some of the later encounters harder to make sure the PCs face a real challenge.

The advantages to this style are pretty obvious. The game not only always moves steadily forward in a (hopefully) entertaining way, but the arbitrary nature of the dice don't dictate what happens—the DM's sense of story does. People interested in simulating epic fantasy stories enjoy this style. They value simulating great fiction more than simulating reality.

The drawbacks are the inverse of the advantages of the referee DM style. Players can lose their sense of accomplishment if they suspect that deep down you won't let them fail. There's an old *Twilight Zone* episode where a criminal dies and goes to Heaven, and finds that he succeeds in everything that he does, no matter what. At the end of the episode, he gets so frustrated with the lack of challenge that he asks to go to Hell. Of course, the twist is that he *is* in Hell. People need to face real challenges, and they need to know that there are consequences for failure, or they get bored. (I've seen people leave the hobby altogether because they thought this was the way it was supposed to be, and got tired of it.) A guide DM must try to keep the players truly challenged, which is itself a challenge for the DM.

Perhaps still worse, the guide DM can fall prey to the needs of his own pre-designed story, leading the players by the nose through a series of all-but-predetermined encounters. The players in this situation (whether they realize it or not) are almost entirely passive spectators to the game, making die rolls that don't mean much or choices that aren't really choices, if given a choice at all. (To put it in simpler terms, if the PCs are faced with three paths through the woods but the DM plans on putting the dragon they are looking for down whichever path they choose, then there is no choice—it's all illusion.)

THE COMPROMISE DM

A lot of people reading this particular column who have DMed in the past probably say to themselves, "I kinda fall in between the two styles." I want to address how difficult it is to find a true compromise between the two styles, and to perhaps discourage people from trying to do so.

Impartiality is an on/off kind of toggle. You can't be somewhat impartial. You either are or you're not. What you can do, however, is give the appearance of impartiality, but then in truth ignore impartiality when you need to. You can make the players think that you're not fudging rolls or tailoring events and encounters for them, even when you are. The problem here is that players are smart. They might figure out your little ruse. They might even test you. Players do this by recklessly throwing themselves into a foolish situation, just to see if you will have events proceed logically or whether you'll use some DM fiat or a deus ex machina to get them out of it.

No, most DMs who see themselves falling into the middle are really guide DMs who don't take the concept to its ultimate conclusion. They prepare and follow the rules closely, but from time to time fudge the dice or alter a situation to maintain the flow of the game. That's not a terrible thing, but there is a danger.

The problem with it is that the players don't know what to expect. They'll wonder if this is the kind of game where crazy heroics are encouraged and even rewarded, or whether careful, thoughtful play is required to succeed (a referee-style DM, carefully obeying the dice, always by default encourages careful play). If they think you're being impartial but then you fudge things so that the wizard lives long enough to summon the powerful demon because that would make for a cooler encounter, they'll feel cheated. Without consistency, they will never know what to expect or exactly what's appropriate in a given situation.

TALK TO THE PLAYERS

Think carefully about what kind of a DM you want to be. Don't just think about the first session or even the first adventure, but consider how you want the whole campaign to go. Once you've made your decision, be up front with the players. Explain to them that you are an impartial arbiter once the game starts, and let the chips fall where they may. Or, tell them that what you want is to work together to create a cool and perhaps even epic campaign, and that there will be plenty of challenges to overcome.

The "Evolution" of the DM

A long time ago, when two DMs would talk, one would say to the other, "well, in my dungeon..." Everything was about the dungeon, so much so that it was just "the dungeon," in general rather than anything more specific. In more recent times, it is more common for a DM to say, "well, in my world..." As more and more DMs took it upon themselves to craft stories, they had to focus on creating worlds to set them in. The art of DMing changed from dealing with small, very specific (and sometimes intricate) concepts to broad, sweeping topics. It's interesting that you can see the social aspects of the game changing as DMs changed from judges to world builders. What was really happening was that the DMs were changing from referees to story tellers. The guide style of DMing became very popular and the referee style was labeled "unsophisticated," or even "immature" compared to the novelist-wanna-be goals of the DM focused on story.

Does that mean that the referee style is just old-fashioned and outdated? Nope. The issue is more complex than that. There are real advantages to staying impartial. If a guide-style DM always fudges the rules in favor of his favorite NPC (so the villain can always get away, for example), that can grow tiresome. Referee-style DMs learn that even anti-climactic scenes can turn around to become interesting situations. Rather than fudge so that the quirk of fate doesn't allow the 1st-level PCs to take down the 10th-level opponent, the referee-style DM knows that the resulting implications of what happens now that the big bad guy is dead might be just as interesting, if not more so, than if he was alive. A major danger of guide-style DMing is the risk of formula. A game run by a detached and impartial referee can feel more natural and will be far less predictable.

Although one style is newer than the other, in truth neither is inherently superior, more sophisticated, or more mature.

ALERT THE WATCH!

BY F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON STUDIOS WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

Summon the guards! Send for the constable! Call the watch! It's a rare campaign where one of these cries isn't heard at least once (usually shouted in panic by shocked commoners, more often than not in response to the PCs). Few PCs want to tangle with a city's law enforcement, but in cases where the PCs botch their dramatic escape or harrowing chase scene, who actually shows up?

This entry of the Campaign Workbook answers that question, providing DMs with a detailed squad of watchmen that might appear whenever someone calls for the police. Whether it's the night watch of a simple town, a patrol of city investigators, or a detachment of the palace guards, these servants of the law are primed and ready to arrive on the scene right when they're needed (or when they're least wanted).

THE INSPECTOR

Inspector Innvar is ambitious, implacable, and unwaveringly devoted to upholding the law. A grim, dark-haired man with severe features, Innvar strikes an intimidating figure, with all the righteous authority of a holy inquisitor. Disillusioned with concepts of innate goodness and the rehabilitation of the unjust, Innvar firmly believes that there are only two types of people in the world: those who abide by the law and those who break it. Some might call Innvar cruel, but he cares nothing for such labels. For him, only the laws and rules matter. Laws support all of society, and only those who are in some way corrupted are willing to go against them in any way. Whether the criminal is a pickpocket or murderer, Innvar deals with lawbreakers in the same way: firmly, ruthlessly, and with disdain. Passionate in his pursuit of justice, he eagerly uses all means available to ferret out those who try to escape the law. Once he begins pursuing a criminal he never remits.

Innvar bears two personal burdens. The first, that his own parents are wanted criminals, has been a shaping force of his life. The other is his growing affection for lieutenant Taila Raynee. Recently, along with his usual daily devotions to St. Cuthbert, Innvar has begun entreating his god for the clarity to ignore the distraction she represents. But despite his prayers he still occasionally finds himself wavering slightly in his single-minded devotion to the law.

Inspector Milous Innvar, male human rogue 5: CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6; hp 20; Init +2, Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d6/18–20, *+1 rapier*) or +6 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +12, Disable Device +8, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4, Listen +10, Open Lock +6, Search +9, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12.

Feats: Alertness, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Halfling.

Possessions: +1 rapier, cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure light wounds, potion of protection from chaos, masterwork light crossbow, 30 bolts, masterwork chain shirt, hooded lantern, masterwork manacles, masterwork thieves' tools, 35 gp.

THE ARCANE INFILTRATOR

An auburn-haired beauty with a light demeanor, few who encounter lieutenant Talia Raynee suspect that she is a rising stars of local law enforcement, much less a talented spellcaster. Using a combination of disguise and magic, Talia adeptly infiltrates even the most tightly guarded criminal circles and attempts to thwart their plots from the inside. Once she penetrates an organization, she uses magic to subdue offenders and make arrests as peacefully as possible. An excellent judge of character, Talia tries to find the good in most people and understands that unfortunate situations might lead even the best-intentioned individuals astray. Her willingness to forgive and sometimes bend the law forces her to walk a fine line when dealing with the adamant will of her superior, Inspector Innvar.

Lieutenant Talia Raynee, female half-elf sorcerer 3: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d4; hp 9; Init +2, Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +0; Atk or Full Atk +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow) or +1 melee (1d4/19–20, masterwork dagger); SA spells; SQ summon familiar (owl), half-elf traits, low-light vision; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +5, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +3, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +4, Search +2, Spellcraft +3, Spot +4 (+7 in shadows).

Feats: Combat Casting, Quick Draw.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/6; caster level 3): 0—*dancing lights, daze* (DC 12), *detect magic, detect poison, message*; 1st—*charm person* (DC 13), *sleep* (DC 13), *ray of enfeeblement* (+3 ranged touch).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: Masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow, 40 bolts, *bracers of armor +1, wand of magic missile* (40 charges, caster level 1), *potion of sanctuary,* disguise kit, hooded lantern, 9 gp.

THE COMMON WATCH PATROL

In most areas, a watch patrol consists of a leader, a lieutenant, and an average of five lower-ranking guardsmen. The NPCs presented here form a well-equipped, well-trained EL 7 group that could comprise the entire police force of a small town or a single patrol of a city's guard. Although the specific classes and levels of these NPCs might change to suit the needs of an area, such a group might appear in any common urban setting.

Perhaps the most distinct feature of a law enforcement group is its uniforms. Traditionally, such uniforms attempt to be both readily noticeable and protective. In most cases, this means that watchmen wear light suits of armor that allow them to move swiftly, as well as a symbol of their authority. Such an emblem might be an actual badge, although broad hats, brightly colored cloaks, ornate mantles, and symbols embossed on armor are also popular. Often a symbol becomes another name for the law enforcers, so a character alluding to a "badge" or a "redcloak" might refer to watchmen that carry such symbols. The watchmen presented here, for example, might wear broad black hats and amulets shaped like the heads of roaring lions.

Everyday commoners might join the watch for a variety of reasons, and thus law enforcers are just as varied as any other NPC. Although the stereotypical guardsman might be an upstanding youth eager to serve his community, DMs should consider other law enforcement archetypes like the fatherly watchman, bumbling recruit, forceful veteran, or crooked turncoat when determining who responds to a call for the guard. In addition, DMs should remember that few law enforcers are merely two-dimensional embodiments of lawful ideals, and should possess their own desires and motivations like any other NPC.

Rather than merely using a patrol of the watch when the PCs get into trouble, DMs should consider using a group of law enforcers as ongoing members of a campaign. For some parties, the watch might provide helpful allies and could offer them support in combating all kinds of city-based threats. On the other hand, if the party breaks the law, offends a member of the royal family, or is accused of some particularly heinous crime, the PCs might find watch patrols hounding their every step. PCs also might make an enemy of a specific member of the watch who doggedly pursues them. Even if the PCs outwit their opponent, a dedicated watch member might advance in level with the PCs as he continues his career and pursuit. For a high-level PC, nothing should prove more humbling than finally being arrested for picking a noble's pocket way back at 1st level.

Watchman, male human fighter 1: CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init –1, Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d10+2/×3, masterwork halberd) or +0 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref –1, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Listen +5, Ride +1, Search +1, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Masterwork halberd, light mace, light crossbow, 30 bolts, masterwork chain shirt, masterwork light steel shield, *potion of cure light wounds,* bullseye lantern, manacles, gp 10.

INSTANT CITY SHOPPING

BY MIKE MEARLS
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON STUDIOS WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

Between each adventure, the characters usually need to stock up on arrows, food, camping gear, and other supplies. In the midst of a game session, the characters might be in a town or city quarter that you have yet to detail when they have the urge to shop. This article presents several businesses that you can use when you don't have anything prepared. The descriptions of each shop avoid covering the particular wares offered, allowing you to use them as armories, general stores, magic item dealers, and so forth.

THE BLACK CAT

Clarina Heygensdottir (N female human adept 4) learned the basics of hedge magic from her father. For several years, she lived in the wilderness around town until she fell in love with and married a merchant. She and her husband opened the Black Cat, and today Clarina handles the shop's day-to-day administration. She scribes runes and warning signs around the area as a ward against bad luck, thieves, and evil spirits. If suspicious-looking customers enter, she uses *detect evil* on them and shoos them away if they seem malevolent in nature. She enhances her mystic reputation by wearing a black robe and by keeping several black cats in the store. In addition to the goods her husband offers, she makes additional money on the side with tarot readings, love potions, astrology, and other endeavors that draw on her arcane knowledge. Many of the Black Cat's customers come to see Clarina first

and purchase goods only as a secondary consideration.

Clarina may offer her services to the PCs, and she gladly casts spells for them at the standard rate. If they spend a lot or are pleasant and polite to her, she gives them free "luck amulets" and similar items in an attempt to make them regular customers.

EGARD'S GOODS

The dwarf **Egard** (NG male dwarf expert 9) has run his shop for over 100 years. He has seen generations come and go, and is a known expert on the neighborhood's history. His eidetic memory allows him to recall details regarding hundreds of people who have worked and lived in the area.

As an old-timer, Egard has gathered a large number of men, dwarves, gnomes, and even a few half-orcs from amongst the locals who use his shop as a place to sit and talk over a bottle of wine. The tables and chairs they use are kept out front during warm days and brought inside for the winter. These oldsters aren't afraid to air any opinions they may have about the PCs and their accomplishments. They keep their ears close to the rumor mill, and spend long hours gossiping and arguing politics. They might try to drag the PCs into their discussions, or they may even try to spark an argument with them simply to pass the time.

GEMMETT'S EMPORIUM

Known for the maddeningly chaotic sprawl of merchandise as much as for the quality of his wares, a trip to Gemmett's resembles an archaeological expedition to uncover a hidden treasure. **Gemmett** (LG male gnome expert 8) is an elderly gnome who made a fortune by buying damaged jewelry and relics from adventurers, restoring them to pristine condition, and selling them to wealthy collectors. As his retirement approaches, he has slowly allowed his business to fall into a decrepit state. He allows his wares to pile up around the store and has no clear idea about what he has in stock. He makes plenty of money selling restored antiques, so he lets the store take care of itself. Adventurers willing to plumb the depths of his shelves might find forgotten magical items, decades-old weapons and armor, and other curios.

If the characters shop at Gemmett's, they must make a Search check (DC 10) to find what they need without Gemmett's help. Stacks of items teeter on the edge of collapse, shelves look like someone has randomly thrown goods upon them, and the shop's corners are filled with piles of random wares.

Gemmett is no fool. He charges standard prices for goods and keeps a tough bodyguard on hand (**Fonwalda**, LN female gnome warrior 3) to protect his more valuable items. A locked room in the back contains his restoration equipment along with a private viewing chamber for his more prestigious clients.

OLIDAMMARA'S FORTUNE

Some believe that **Arkaral the Fortunate** (CN male elf expert 4) is a madman. Others see him as blessed by the god Olidammara, a man who threw himself into luck's grasp and emerged all the better for it. Arkaral once traveled the trade routes as a merchant until a group of ettins attacked his caravan. The ettins slammed Arkaral's wagon into a river, tossing the elf into the churning current. Before he lost consciousness, Arakaral vowed to dedicate his life to Olidammara if the god would grant him the luck to survive. Today, Arakaral's shop is a small shrine to the Laughing Rogue.

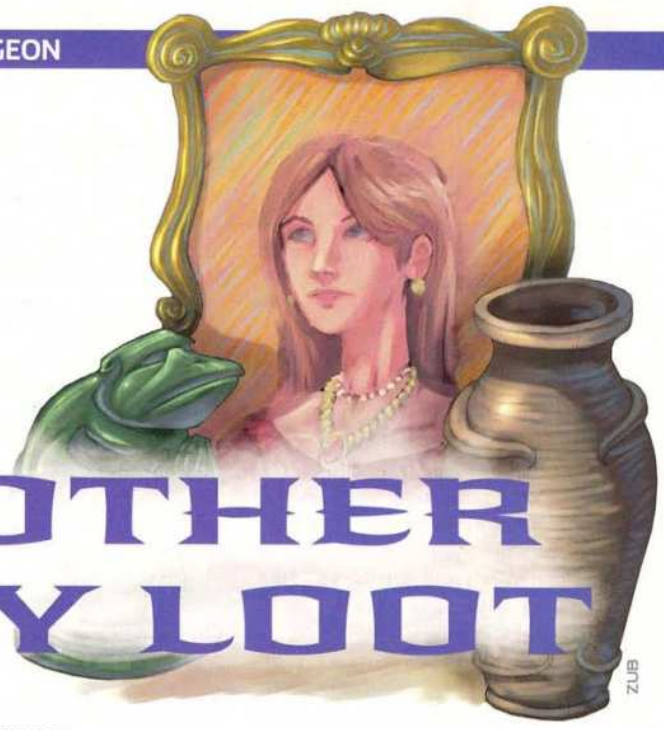
Arkaral keeps wine and fresh food available for customers, and he loves to ply clients with drinks before settling down to business. He uses a great wheel mounted on one wall of his shop to determine an item's final price. When a customer is ready to purchase something, Arkaral offers to spin the wheel to determine the final price. When a PC wishes to buy something, roll 1d20. Chaotic neutral PCs, bards, rogues, and clerics of Olidammara receive a +4 luck bonus on their rolls. Roll 1d20 with a +2 luck bonus for Arkaral (Olidammara favors him, for now at least). If the PC beats Arkaral's roll by 10 or more, he receives a 10% discount. If Arkaral's result is 10 or more than the PC's roll, the price increases by 10%. Otherwise, the characters pay the normal amount. Characters who refuse to pay the extra 10% (perhaps deciding to purchase the item elsewhere) receive a –1 penalty on their next important attack roll or skill check.

THREE CROWNS

Marked by a bright red sign depicting three golden crowns, this shop caters to those who deal in stolen goods. The owner, **Tondarro** (N female half-elf expert 2/rogue 1) works with several gangs of thieves in the city. She buys their stolen goods and either offers them for sale in her shop (if the items are impossible to trace) or sells them to smugglers who can take them out of the city. Three Crowns serves as a cover for her true business, but she soon found that adventurers liked shopping here for the good prices she offers. As a one-time adventurer, she has a good eye for picking out items and goods that explorers may find useful, such as 10-foot poles, cold iron daggers, and vials of poison.

Tondarro offers a 10% discount on any item that has a list value of 50 gp or less. Since she buys stolen goods, she can afford to sell them cheap. The PCs might inadvertently buy a stolen item that is later recognized by its previous owner. They might even purchase a backpack or chest that has a map hidden within, a secret compartment, or some similar item still sought by its former owners

Tondarro is always ready to pull up shop and seek a safe haven if the authorities learn of her true business dealings. She might abandon her shop overnight only to turn up in another city a few kingdoms over.



ART AND OTHER FANCY LOOT

BY WOLFGANG BAUR
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON STUDIOS WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

There are only so many artists in the world, and most of them aren't any good. Ergo, fine art is worth money. How much money, asks the curious adventurer? That depends.

ART AND CULTURAL LEVEL

All art objects fall into three rough categories: tribal/nomadic, low culture, and high culture. Art created by a tribal or nomadic society that possesses relatively simple tools, few resources, and little time to devote to art (such as barbarians and most humanoids) is likely to be fairly crude. Cultures with low levels of technological development create art primarily to satisfy the religious needs of jealous gods or despots, and often work in bronze or stone. On the other hand, works of art created by Iron Age or medieval cultures can take a wide variety of forms, and are not necessarily religiously or politically inspired.

Dwarven and elven artists are highly valued for the excellence of their art. They work in forms not always understood by humans, but their work always commands a premium price from aristocrats, collectors, and royalty.

Rarest of all are enchanted artworks. These do not have useful magical properties, but instead use magic to create the artwork (such as levitating several pieces of a sculpture), or to enhance its appearance (such as a shimmering, glowing, or moving tapestry).

MASTERWORK

Some works of art are works of genius, crafted so skillfully that they are acknowledged as among the finest of their kind. Recognizing such a work requires a successful DC 20 Appraise check. Anyone lucky enough to own a masterwork piece of art can typically expect 5 times the usual value for it in gold—assuming the buyer recognizes the art for what it is with his own successful Appraise check. Some works of genius look like junk, or offend the taste of the public—if the buyer does not agree that an item is a work of genius, the offering price is one quarter of the usual price for the artwork.

Table 1: Tapestries and Carpets

d%	Type	Approx. Size (ft.)	Weight (pounds)	Value (gp)
01–10	Cotton, Low	4 × 6	36	20
11–18	Cotton, High	6 × 10	90	100
19–30	Wool, Nomadic	4 × 6	48	300
31–45	Wool, Low	8 × 12	192	900
46–60	Wool, High	10 × 12	240	2,000
61–62	Wool, Enchanted	4 × 5	50	5,000
63–68	Wool, Dwarven	4 × 8	70	500
69–70	Silk, Nomadic	6 × 10	60	2,000
71–80	Silk, Low	10 × 12	120	5,000
81–95	Silk, High	15 × 30	450	12,000
96–99	Silk, Elven	15 × 20	300	10,000+
00	Silk, Enchanted	6 × 10	150	15,000

TAPESTRIES AND CARPETS

The most expensive and elaborate art in a medieval castle was woven—carpets and tapestries crafted from cotton, silk, or wool. The finest of these could be the work of dozens of weavers over the course of several years; the crudest are created between one camp and the next on a nomad's basic hanging loom.

Damage and Appraisal

Paintings, tapestries, and carpets are all prone to damage from water, destruction by mold or rodents, bleaching from sunlight, as well as rips, wear, and tear. Appraising condition can help adventurers avoid carrying off the shiniest but most subtly damaged works. As a rule, damage reduces the value of these items by 20 to 90%.

SCULPTURE AND CARVINGS

Sculpture is a seemingly simple art: carve something out of wood or stone, or cast it in metal. In fact, doing it well requires both excellent tools and a high degree of skill. Tribal cultures can work with wood and stone; only high cultures and a few low cultures can work with difficult metals like iron and mithral.

Table 2: Sculptures

d%	Type	Typical Weight	Value (gp)
01–09	Wood, Tribal	3	1–6
10–13	Wood, Low	10	2–20
14–20	Wood, High	20+	4–80
21–28	Stone, Tribal	20	10–100
29–34	Stone, Low	40	250
35–40	Stone, High	100	1,000
41–45	Stone, Dwarven	400	4,000
46–47	Stone, Enchanted	200	3,000
48–50	Bronze, Tribal	3	10
51–56	Bronze, Low	10	100
57–66	Bronze, High	40	400
67	Bronze, Enchanted	20	4,000
68–71	Silver, Tribal	1	25
72–76	Silver, Low	5	50
77–80	Silver, High	10	500
81	Silver, Dwarven	50	5,000
82	Silver, Enchanted	20	6,000
83	Gold, Tribal	1	150
84–86	Gold, Low	2	600
87–89	Gold, High	5	1,500
90	Gold, Elven	10	3,500
91	Gold, Dwarven	40	20,000
92	Gold, Enchanted	20	15,000
93	Iron, Low	250	6,000
94–95	Iron, High	300	18,000
96	Iron, Dwarven	200	24,000
97	Iron, Enchanted	200	30,000
98	Mithral, High	10	25,000
99	Mithral, Elven	10	50,000+
00	Mithral, Enchanted	10	75,000+

Table 3: Statue Type

d%	Subject
01–40	Single Human
41–50	Group of creatures
51–60	Humanoid
61–70	Equestrian
71–80	Animal
81–90	Monstrous
91–94	Religious Figure
95–100	Abstract

Enchanted Sculptures

Many enchanted sculptures are actually constructs, able to move and speak; the vital statistics for such creatures can be taken from golems, animated objects, and other fabricated beings. The value of such constructs depends on knowing their command words as much as on the quality of their materials and fabrication.

Some enchanted sculptures are immobile, able to sing, prophesize, or otherwise amuse their owners. They are sometimes little more than magical vessels to contain an elemental or other spirit that speaks or performs on command.

Dwarves consider mithral too valuable to use in statuary. Elves usually consider iron too crude to sculpt. Tribal cultures cannot work iron or mithral into art.

Table 5: Painting Subject

d%	Subject
01–30	Portrait
31–35	Nude
36–45	Battle
46–55	Group scene
56–65	Religious
66–70	Allegorical or mythological
71–90	Landscape or city scene
91–95	Animals
96–100	Still life

PAINTINGS

Paintings on boards or leather are rarely as rich in color or as well preserved as those done on canvas with oils, tempura, varnish, and the full range of technique. Both are fairly common in the halls of nobles and the wealthy.

Icons

Religious paintings are sometimes so beloved by believers that the paintings themselves are venerated and worshiped; these paintings are known as icons. Most icons show a champion, saint, or avatar of the god, and all are decorated with gold leaf and precious and semi-precious stones. Icons are worth 3 times the usual rate for the additional materials and quality; to a believer, they can be worth 5 times the usual rate for such work.

Table 4: Paintings and Miniatures

d%	Type	Typical Weight	Value (gp)
01–20	Tribal wood or leather	15	20
21–35	Low wood or leather	10	60
36–45	High wood or leather	10	1d6 × 100
46–48	Elven wood or leather	8	2d10 × 100
49–50	Dwarven wood or leather	10	1d12 × 100
51–55	Low canvas	10	2d8 × 100
56–75	High canvas	7	5d4 × 100
76–80	High canvas, miniature	1	4d6 × 100
81–87	High canvas, triptych	30	1d8 × 1,000
88–89	High canvas, salon	40	1d10 × 1,000
90–94	Dwarven canvas	5	2d6 × 1,000
95–98	Elven canvas	5	2d10 × 1,000
99–100	Elven canvas, miniature	1	3d8 × 1,000

PILGRIMS ON THE ROAD

BY MIKE MEARLS
ILLUSTRATION BY UDON STUDIOS
WITH JIM ZUBKAVICH

The gods wield tremendous power. Their clerics call upon powerful magic to smite the living and can raise legions of the walking dead. Paladins and blackguards smite their foes with divine wrath. A temple can wield tremendous political clout in a kingdom, as it offers or denies the support of the gods.

But not all of the gods' servants are mighty warriors or crusading priests. Many of them are common folk drawn to a deity's teachings. These worshipers may lack a cleric's spells or a paladin's fighting skills, but they can still play an important role in an adventure. This article presents sample pilgrims or agents for a variety of deities. You can use them as short encounters while the party is on the road. The pilgrims actively work to promote their deities' interests, giving them a good reason to interfere with the party. The pilgrims also serve as examples of how folk other than clerics or druids can play an important role in a religion's activities.

ERYTHNUL

Therris Windrunner (CE male elf rogue 2) poses as a cleric of Boccob. He stole the robes and holy symbol he now owns from a wandering priest that he ambushed and killed. In his current guise, he claims to seek knowledge of people and places to add to the catalogues of Boccob's libraries. He asks questions about the party's exploits, paying careful attention to the PCs' tactics, favored spells, weapons, and magical equipment. He may use seemingly innocent questions on the details of a specific encounter or battle to unearth

this information. Once he completes this reconnaissance, he reports to a small group of murderous brigands who tailor their plans to counter the PCs' favorite abilities and tactics.

HEXTOR

Delyra (CE female halfling bard 5) poses as a wandering minstrel and storyteller. She claims to spread news and rumors from near and far, but in truth she works to inflame political and racial tensions and provoke fights on the road. She may steal an item from a merchant, hide it in an adventurer's pack, and then inform the merchant of the "robbery." With a few choice comments or insults, she tries to goad others into fights. She likes to spread malicious stories that ruin the reputations of honorable adventurers. Delyra sees herself as a herald of Hextor. As she travels, chaos, bloodshed, and death trail in her wake.

KORD

Grond Fisthammer (CG male dwarf barbarian 3) leads a small group of dwarves who follow Kord. This band of pilgrims seeks to prove their might against a variety of opponents. If they meet anyone who is obviously in excellent physical condition, they challenge that character to a wrestling match or arm wrestling contest. In the former case, both combatants remove their armor, drop any weapons, and grapple until one person pins the other and holds his foe in place for one round. In the later case, both competitors make opposed Strength checks until one person succeeds three times. Grond mocks those who turn down his challenge. He may decide to follow a coward for several miles, hoping to use taunts to force a contest. Grond has a 16 Strength and the Improved Unarmed Strike and Improved Grapple feats.

NERULL

Eral (NE male human bard 2) and **Vendra** (NE female half-elf expert 3) are human worshipers of Nerull who seek to spread death on the road. They pose as a pair of supply-laden merchants. They also carry a few satchels of spices and herbs that they sell to other travelers. When they encounter the PCs, they beg to travel with them. Eral claims that the mercenaries they hired took their money and fled during the night. If the PCs agree, Eral and Vendra offer to share their food, water, and other supplies, including a large, comfortable tent. The food they offer is tainted with spoiled flesh and ordure. Any PC who eats it is exposed to blinding sickness (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, p. 292). If the PCs refuse, Vendra tries to distract the PCs while Eral slips the contaminated food into their meal.

OBAD-HAI

Jethren the Wayfarer (NG male human commoner 4) is a hermit and fanatic worshiper of Obad-Hai. He wanders the road on a quest to walk around the entire planet. He believes that if he completes this task, he will gain a cosmic insight into the workings of the Shalm's mind. He has long, shaggy hair, tanned skin, and rotted, crooked teeth. He refuses to use any product of civilization, and wears only a simple deerskin robe. He also carries a gnarled, stout oaken branch as a staff. He tracks the party from their last campsite. If the PCs left behind any trash, even ashes from a campfire, he hunts them down, throws their garbage at them, and demands an apology for their violation against nature. If the PCs humor him or make an effort to treat the wilderness with respect, he does what he can to help them. He hears much news on the road and could offer valuable information.

PELOR

Claren (LG male human cleric 5) has served Pelor for more than 50 years. Day after day, he wanders the road in search of those who need his magic. He keeps a small store of potions purchased with the donations he receives for his work. Claren freely offers his assistance to the poor and downtrodden, and in exchange for his help he requests a donation or an oath of debt. In the latter case, he asks travelers to travel to the nearest temple of Pelor and offer their services to the clerics. Claren believes that Pelor guides his steps, and time and again he has arrived in the nick of time to save an injured traveler or aid adventurers who in turn completed quests in Pelor's name. If the characters are in desperate need of divine magic, Claren might arrive to help them while also serving as a convenient excuse to put the party into Pelor's debt.

ST. CUTHBERT

Krotor the Resolute (LN male orc commoner 1/warrior 1) is a reformed bandit who, under the strict tutelage of priests of St. Cuthbert, renounced evil and became a traveling prophet and preacher. He still bears the symbolic scars of his tribe along his arms and face, but he now wears a simple, brown robe and carries a thick tome of St. Cuthbert's teachings. Krotor prefers to deliver his sermons at busy crossroads and is not above yelling to make his point. He may dog the tracks of a cleric of a rival faith, debating points of theology or making a hard sell for a conversion. Krotor is intelligent even compared to humans, but he loves to play stupid to turn the tables on others. Despite his aggressive tactics, Krotor has renounced violence. He fights only to protect himself and others.

WEE JAS

Entherra (N female gnome expert 3) is a wandering fortuneteller and worshiper of Wee Jas who spreads her goddess' message through the visions into the future that she offers. She believes that if her auguries are depressing or doom-laden, she can help drive travelers to their doom or spread a general sense of pessimism and misery. She uses a deck of cards similar to the tarot, careful questions to probe a person's past and expectations, and sufficiently vague but ominous declarations to terrify others. By paying sharp attention to news and rumors, she might pick up enough information on the party to give them seemingly accurate or well-informed "insights" on their current adventure.

LARSA ESSINEL

DRAGON ASSASSIN

BY F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER
ILLUSTRATION BY WAYNE REYNOLDS

When a green dragon added a small secluded elven town on the edge of a deep forest to his verdant empire, the resulting conflict proved swift and decisive. After he had taken what treasures he desired, the dragon occupied the town with a band of human mercenaries, allowing them to do as they pleased with the people and remaining possessions of the isolated community.

Larsa Essinel's mother barely survived the dragon's attack, giving birth months later to the half-elf child of one of the wyrm's thugs. Raised by an embittered mother and mocked by humans and elves who despised her for her parentage, Larsa barely survived on the defeated community's scraps. Many times she tried to escape, but by the dragon's mandate those of elven blood were slaves to their ruler's soldiers and she suffered harsh punishments for her attempts. Brutal treatment

at the hands of her human rulers and their rarely seen dragon master hardened Larsa, and when an escape attempt finally succeeded, she vowed to have her revenge against such creatures.

In the years following, Larsa honed her hatred of dragons, and to lesser extent humans, into deadly skill. Eagerly seeking out rumors of wyrms of all types to learn more of their ways and weaknesses, one of her first discoveries was the lair of a recently slain black dragon. Although thoroughly looted, the dragon's killers had overlooked a pair of the dragon's young. Overcome with disgust, Larsa's arrows quickly felled one and crippled the other. Viewing the wounded dragon as a unique opportunity to learn more about her prey, she bound and muzzled the creature. She skinned its sibling before the dragon's glaring yellow eyes, later having its hide crafted into a fine suit of armor.

Since her initial escapades, Larsa has become known as the dragon assassin, ever following tales in search of dragons and slaying them heedless of their color, the size of their horde, or the their reputation for good or evil. The only dragon she tolerates is her captive Sslyst, the name she's given the black wyrmling (a variant of the elven word for "worm"). Although the half-crazed dragon despises her with a fervor few mortals could comprehend, Larsa takes every opportunity to promise Sslyst that should he disobey her, he'll join his sister as part of the dragon assassin's wardrobe.

Together with her animal companion, a dire bat called Wyrmblood, Larsa continues to satisfy her unending lust for the blood of all dragons by seeking them out and destroying them wherever they hide. Her greatest dream remains to become skilled enough to face the green dragon that still rules her homeland; not out of any weak sentimentality for the place, but rather to see its draconic lord cower before her as she did so many times before it.

APPEARANCE

Larsa Essinel might be considered beautiful if not for her eyes. Many people say that one can pick out murderers by the cold hardness in their pupils. As Larsa's prey are among the most powerful and breathtaking creatures in existence, the stony, hate-filled chill that infuses her implacable gaze makes all but the most callous look away. A fair-skinned blonde by nature, the scars and burns of a hundred battles mar her elven flesh, and each time she kills a dragon she uses the fresh blood to dye her hair, turning it shockingly red.

But besides her physical appearance, Larsa is perhaps best recognized by her armor: an ornate suit of studded leather, mottled and scaled in the same way as the black dragon she slaughtered to make it.

TACTICS

To Larsa's mind, the concept of honor is synonymous with a quick death. Knowledgeable in the defenses and locations of dragon lairs, she prefers to sneak close to her draconic prey and attack from the shadows, her initial shots often driving younger dragons into flight. In such cases, she eagerly mounts and makes use of her dire bat animal companion's speed to press her attack.

Against older dragons or more powerful foes, Larsa often enlists hired help to enter her prey's lair before her. While her supposed allies are slaughtered, she usually has enough time to make several attacks against her foe.

DEVELOPMENT

If faced with a dragon, a party of adventurers could hope for few more potent allies than Larsa Essinel. If they weather her largely antisocial behavior and her single-minded passion for the kill, their prey is practically as good as dead.

On the other hand, good dragons have as much to fear from Larsa as evil ones. A party may find themselves standing between the dragon assassin and her prey, where even the most convincing words and tempting bribes do little to dissuade her.

Larsa might even approach a band of adventurers to join her in hunting her current prey. While she might offer a king's ransom for their service, the dragon assassin only has to pay those that survive, and her tactics rarely consider any but her own survival. It's even said that those she hires that do outlive their prey often meet with unfortunate accidents soon after their unlikely survival.

Larsa Essinel, female half-elf ranger 8, dragonstalker 6:** CR 14; Medium humanoid; HD 14d8; hp 66; Init +5, Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 18, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +14; Grp +15; Atk +16 melee (1d8+1/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +15/+15/+15 ranged (1d6+2/x3, *+1 bane vs. dragons composite shortbow* using Manyshot) or +21 ranged (1d6+2/x3, *+1 bane vs. dragons composite shortbow*; Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+1/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +19/+19/+14/+9 ranged (1d6+2/x3, *+1 bane vs. dragons composite shortbow* with Rapid Shot); SA archery improved combat style, favored enemy (dragons) +4, favored enemy (humans) +2, ignore natural armor, sneak attack (dragon) +6d6; SQ animal companion, hide scent, hunting bonus, swift tracker, wild empathy +8, woodland stride; AL CN; SV Fort +10, Ref +18, Will +11; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +3*, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +3, Gather Information +6, Hide +22, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +3, Listen +8*, Move Silently +22, Ride +9, Search +8*, Spot +17*, Survival +19.

Feats: Blindfight, Endurance[B], Improved Critical (shortbow), Manyshot[B], Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Rapid Shot[B], Track[B], Weapon Focus (short bow).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven.

Hunting Bonus (Ex): *Larsa gains a bonus equal to her dragonstalker class level on Bluff, Listen, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot checks when using these skills against dragons

Sneak Attack (Dragon) (Ex): Any time a dragon would be denied its Dexterity bonus to armor, Larsa's attack deals an extra 6d6 points of damage. This ability functions exactly as a rogue's sneak attack ability, except that it only affects dragons and flanking does not allow her to use this ability.

Ignore Natural Armor (Ex): Once per day, Larsa can ignore a target's natural armor bonus (including any enhancement to that natural armor) for one attack (melee or ranged).

Hide Scent (Ex): Larsa can use the Disguise skill to hide her (or someone else's) scent. This requires a Disguise check (with a -10 penalty) opposed by a Wisdom check made by any creature attempting to use the scent ability to discover her presence. Hiding her scent requires twice as long as a typical Disguise check (1d3x20 minutes), and the effect lasts for 1 hour per class level. Magic that alters Larsa's form doesn't affect this Disguise check.

Ranger Spells Prepared (caster level 4): 1st—*resist energy, speak with animals*; 2nd—*protection from energy*.

Possessions: Masterwork longsword, dagger, 1 *dragon slaying arrow*, *+1 bane vs. dragons composite shortbow*, *+3 black dragoncraft studded leather armor**, *cloak of resistance +2*, *ring of protection +3*.

*Dragoncraft armor is detailed on page 117 of the *Draconomicon*. This particular suit of armor grants acid resistance 5.

Wyrmblood, Dire Bat Animal Companion: hp 30, *Monster Manual* 62.

Sslyst, Black Dragon Wyrmling: hp 30, *Monster Manual* 70.

**The dragonstalker prestige class first appeared in the *Draconomicon*.

Downer and the dead bard Loops witness a shift in power in Oubliette's war with the infernal invaders. The city's mayor, Garrish, and the mad alchemist xorn Stovebones have parved local undead of their negative energy and seized control of the empty vessels. After dodging traps to retreat to Downer's filthy home, Downer and Loops are stunned to discover Boss Baird, master of the Thieves Guild, patiently waiting.
THOSE PSEUDO-UNDEAD ARE HEADING INTO THE CITY.
YOU'RE GOING INTO THE OVERBRIGHT, SO PACK LIKE YOU MIGHT NOT BE COMING BACK.
IT'LL BE A DELIGHT TO GET OUT OF THIS MADHOUSE.
YOU LIVE LIKE A PIG.
HEY! I'M NEVER HOME!
WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE BITCHY GHOST?
HE'S INVOLVED, ACTUALLY--
--HE COMES BACK WITH US TO THE GUILD.

Story and art by Kyle Stanley Hunter. Lettering by Sean Glenn. A Super Unicorn production. www.superunicorn.com

OI, GAJO! BONA VADA MI OGLES!*
THE ULOLOK WILL ONLY FURTHER DESTABILIZE OUBLIETTE.
NOW THAT EVERYONE WANTS IT, INCLUDING THE DEVILS, IT'S BEST IF WE TAKE IT OUT OF TOWN.

*HEY STRANGER. GOOD TO SEE YOU.

SHAKEN (DMG P. 301), NOT STIRRED

Illustration by Stan Shaw

When I was younger, I'd take lots of risks in Las Vegas, mostly at the craps or blackjack tables. After I had kids, though, I realized how stupid the statement "It's only money" really is. "It's only school clothes" or "It's only a chunk of the college fund" was more like it. I'll still play low-stakes poker, but that's different, because I think of it as more of a game of skill than a game of luck.

I recently found myself in Las Vegas with my friend Jon, standing dangerously close to a blackjack table.

"Hey, let's play a few hands," he said.

"Uhh... no." I said.

"Aw, come on! It'll be fun!"

"How much do you want to gamble with?" I said.

"Five hundred," he said with a shrug. Jon is an Internet millionaire, and he said "Five hundred" the way I'd say "fifty cents," but still...

"FIVE HUNDRED?! ARE YOU NUTS?!"

"Come on, man! We're in Vegas."

I reached into my pocket and protectively held my bankroll. I'd started with 200 dollars, and I'd spent three hours at a low-limit poker game grinding out an additional $27. I felt good about that small profit, and I wanted to protect it.

"I've got kids to feed," I said.

"Come on, I'll buy you a drink if you play with me."

Jon is a... persuasive person. He's sort of a bard, with +4 Cha (+8 when dealing with the opposite sex—it's stunning to watch), and I didn't stand a chance against his *charm person*, but I made a Wil save anyway.

"Oh? You mean one of those so-called 'free' drinks they give you when you're dropping fifteen bucks a hand?"

He laughed, and clapped me on the back. "Yeah, one of those."

I totally blew my save, and put two $100 bills on the felt.

Before I could come to my senses and grab them back, our dealer, a tall guy in his mid-20s named Allen, picked them up. "Change two hundred," he said, and gave me twenty red and four green chips. I wondered what madness had possessed me as I put three red chips in front of me and watched the deal.

A cocktail waitress came by, and we ordered drinks: a Macallan rocks no water for me and a Sam Adams for him.

While we waited for our "free" drinks to arrive, Jon raked in win after win, but I could not catch a single card. Sure, I was playing solid Basic Strategy, but I was losing, and it wasn't very much fun. As a matter of fact, it was pretty much the polar opposite of fun, and after less than 20 minutes, I was down to my last green chip.

I looked at my mostly-empty glass of scotch, and pulled out the little red stirring straw. It was time to take a stand.

"This," I said, "Is my *+1 wand of winning*."

"What?" Jon said.

"Watch." I said, as I put my last $25 on the table.

"Let's do this, Allen," I said.

He dealt me a twelve, and turned up a seven.

"Hit me," I said, pointing my straw—I mean, my wand—at my cards. Jon laughed and nearly shot beer out of his nose when Allen gave me a nine, for twenty-one.

For the next several hands, I used my wand to hit or stand, and in just 10 minutes I was up over $100!

"You'd better be careful," Jon said, "You're going to run out of charges."

I grabbed his beer out of his hand and said, "Not to worry. I have an artifact: *Samuel's Beer of Infinite Blackjacks!*"

I took a deep drink, and told Allen, "You know what to do."

I know you won't believe me, dear reader, but I got a blackjack on the very next hand.

"Yes!" I shouted, "That is what I am talking about! Critical Success, baby!"

Allen looked at me while he shuffled. "Are you talking about D&D?"

"Yeah," I said, sheepishly. "I'm sort of a geek."

"Dude, I love D&D!" he said, "I've been playing since the red box."

"Me too! I've noticed that you can take the gamer out of the game... but you can't take the game out of the gamer..." I picked up my wand, and waved it at him, "if you get my drift."

We played a few more hands, and I ultimately left with $110 more than I had when I sat down. I put my *+1 wand of winning* in my shirt pocket, and walked to the casino cage with Jon, who had twenty black chips in his hands.

"I'm going to hit the sack," I said, while the cashier counted out my money.

"Okay. I'm going to play at the high stakes tables for a while." He paused. "Do you think I could borrow your *+1 wand of winning*?"

This time, I made a natural twenty on my Wil save. "I think it's out of charges," I said, as I patted my pocket and walked out of the Dungeon.

Er, I mean, Casino.

DUNGEON #118

MAP & HANDOUT SUPPLEMENT

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Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

BOX OF FLUMPH

by Tim Hitchcock

It had to happen. Of all the creatures in the history of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, the lowly flumph has perhaps the worst reputation. Can Tim Hitchcock and the DUNGEON staff revive this loveable loser in a way that won't fill Prison Mail with hate mail? A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

Sarim Pepper

Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

Dusky

Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

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Flumph

Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

The Grackle

Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

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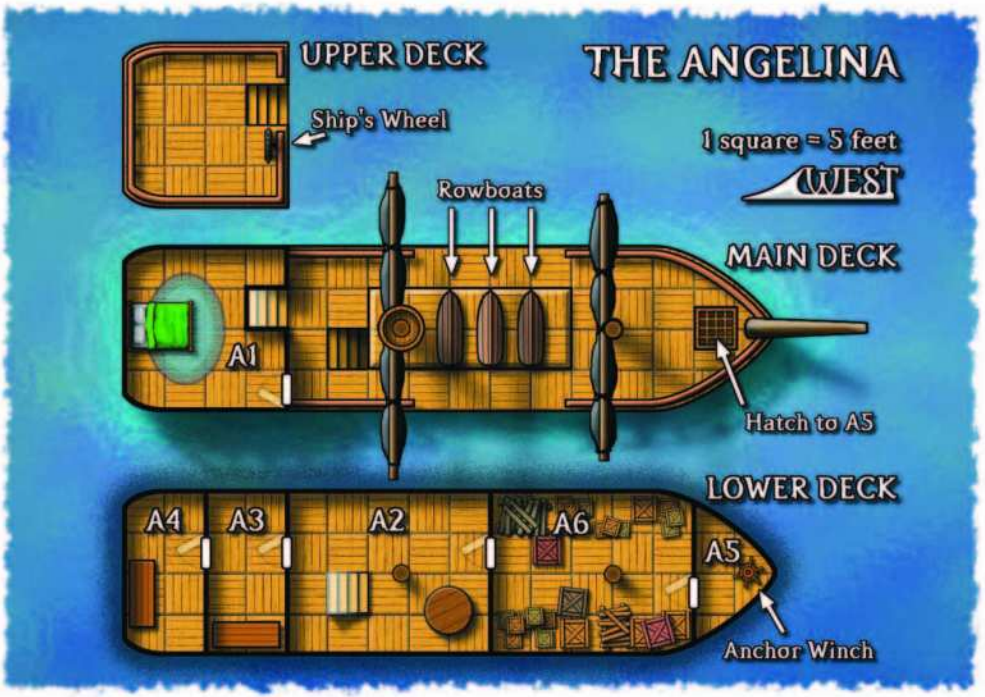

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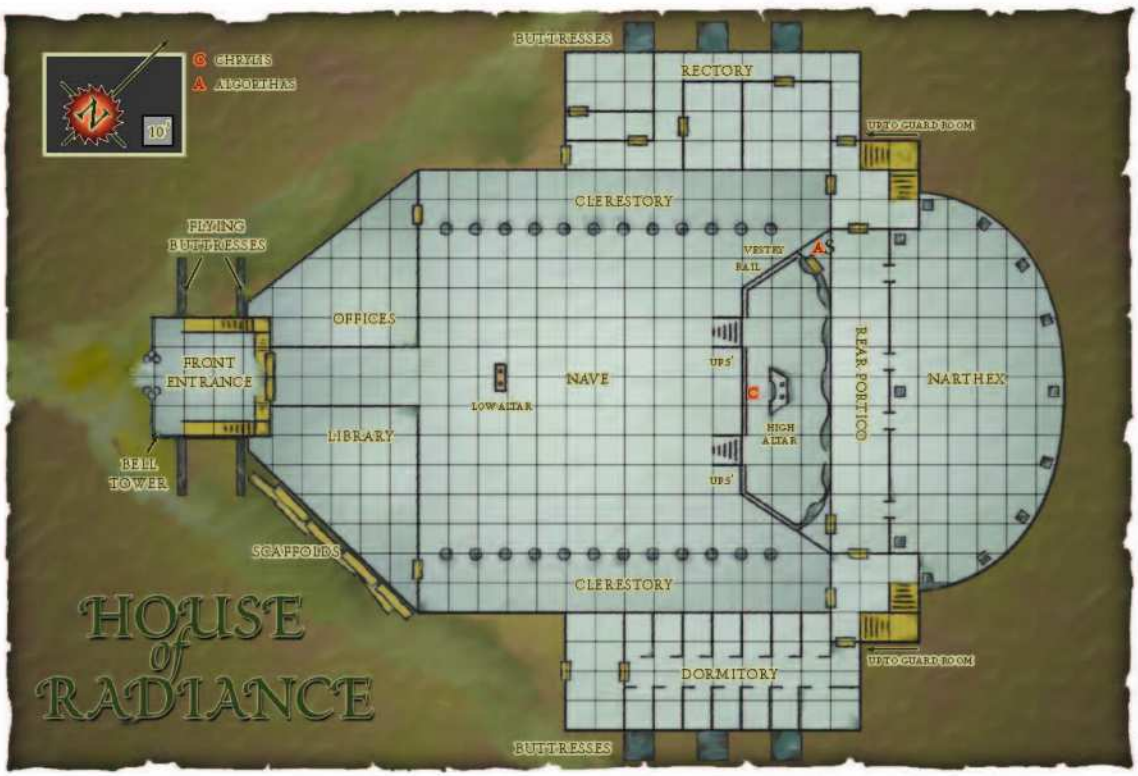
Illustration by James Ryman

SHADOWS OF THE ABYSS

by Greg A. Vaughn

On the trail of Ilkharis, frost giant cleric of Kostchtchie and pawn of the Malgoth, the PCs venture out of Istivin to a mountain border fort inhabited by giants and a nasty blue dragon. Part Two of the *Istivin: City of Shadows* Campaign Arc. A D&D adventure for 11th-level characters.



Map by Peter Whitley

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Key to the City of Istivin

1. Javan Gate
2. Brink's Gate
3. Trade Gate
4. East Citadel
5. West Citadel
6. Krelont Keep
7. The House of Tabard (shabby inn)
8. The Gryphon's Arms (expensive inn)
9. House of Radiance (Pelor)
10. The Gilded House (Zilchus)
11. The Maiden's Shield (Mayaheine)
12. The Tower of Custom (Allitur)
13. Algorthas the Seer's Manor
14. Barclay House
15. The Old Livery
16. Qualtaine Square
17. The Effluvium
18. Chapterhouse of the Star
19. The Circus
20. Oliphant House (vacant demense)
21. Ancient Stone Circle
22. The Fiddling Viceroy (standard inn)
23. The Dwarven Court
24. Shrine (Ehlonna)
25. North Square
26. Temple (Fharlanghn)
27. Temple (Heironeous)
28. Temple (Ulaa)
29. Gate Square

Illustration by Chad Du Loc & Kevin Yan

Map by Robert Lazzaretti

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Illustration by Chad Du Lac & Jim Zubkavich

Mad Amos

Baron Teusele

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Gleodites

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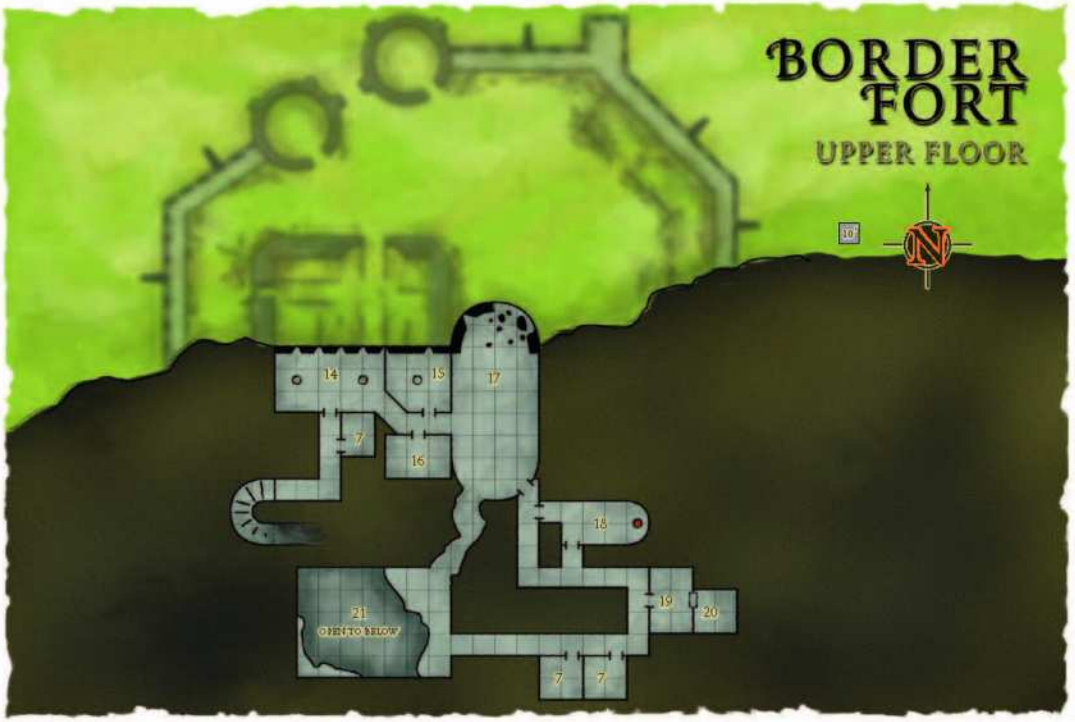

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Illustration by Derek Thompson

THRONE OF IUZ

by John Simcoe

At the heart of the Vesve Forest lies the warped, twisted region of deadly bogs, acidic gases, and treacherous terrain known as the Defiled Glades. And out of the Defiled Glades hops King Bog, a titanic awakened toad with a taste for player characters. A D&D adventure for 14th-level characters.

Map by Mike Schley

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Holy Symbol of Iuz

Illustration by Derek Thompson

Illustration by Derek Thompson

Milo Ostroff

General Grauss

Illustration by Derek Thompson

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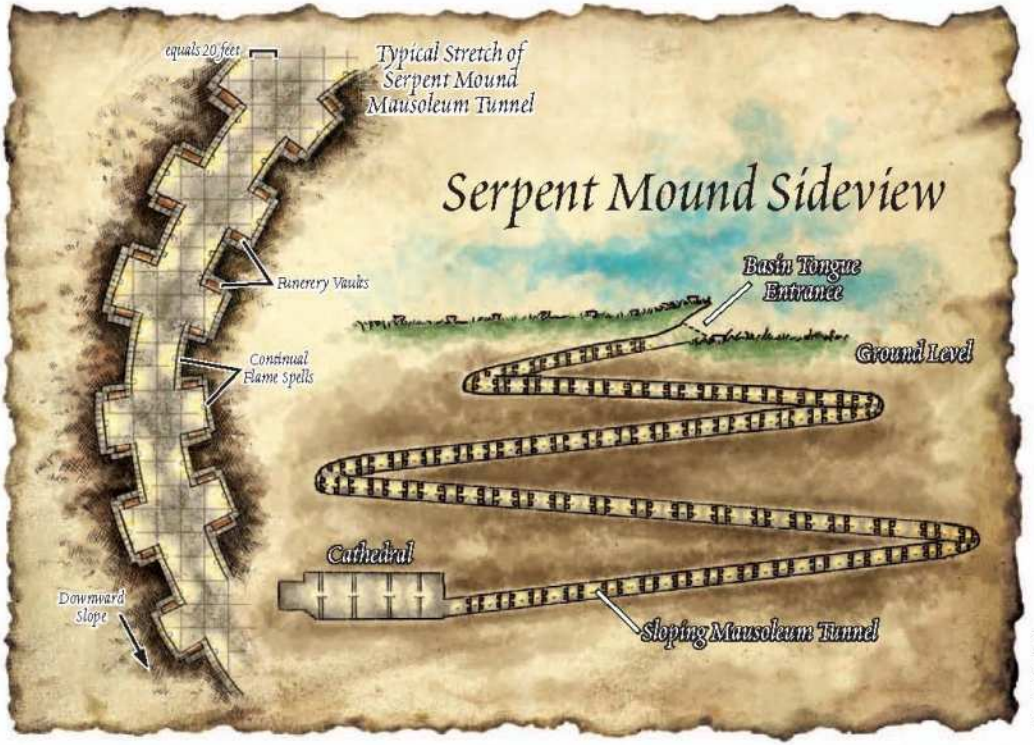

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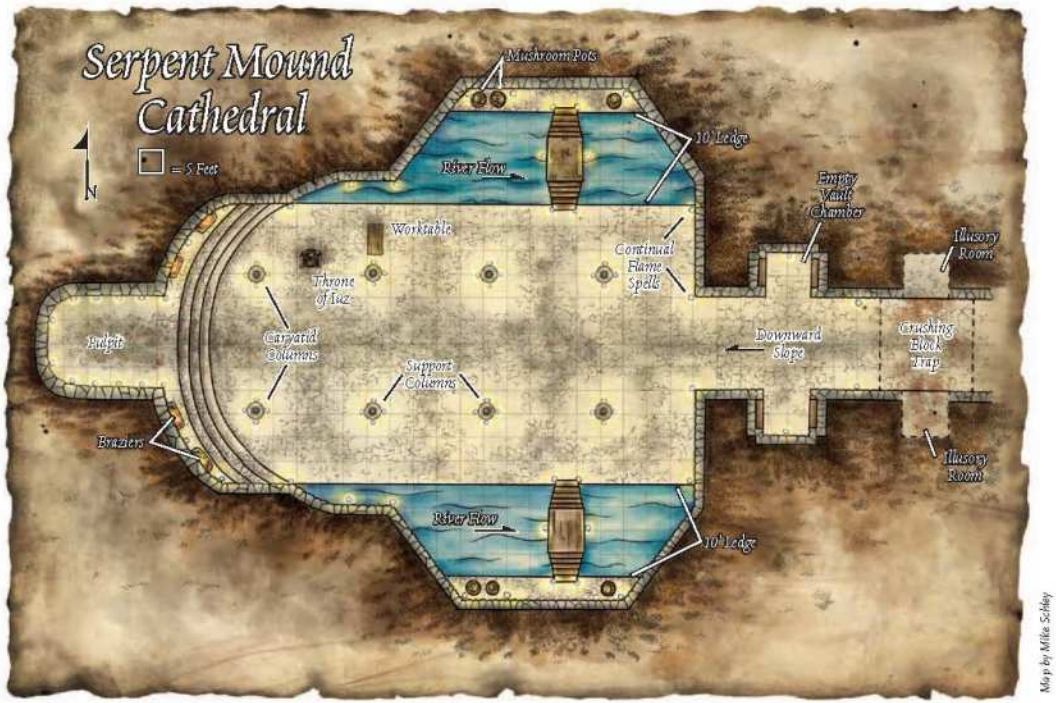

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